

Death is Predictable **but** Life Isn't

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

- A. Slide2 Next Wed Night - An all church **family night**. *Free food and dessert.*
1. It's a chance for many of the **kids** to meet their new leaders as they move on up to their new grade. We'll have areas 4 **parents** to meet leaders/ask questions.

II. **Intro:**

- A. Slide3 *Death is Predictable but Life Isn't*. - **Death** is a Fact of Life. **Life** is...
1. Thomas Carlyle *called life a little gleam of time between two eternities.*
 2. Seneca said, *as a tale, so is life; not how long it is, but how good it is.*
- B. Let's remember, Solomon is coming to these conclusions using only *observable data* found in *the material universe*. **And that the finite** cannot understand the **infinite**.

III. Slide4 **FACING DEATH (1-6)**

- A. Slide5 I guess you can say regarding God, *He's got the whole world in His hands.* (1)
- B. (2) Yes *we share a common destiny* on earth (NIV) in that all go to the **grave**. **But**, we **DO NOT** share a common **eternity**.
1. Like the popular epitaph: *Pause stranger when you pass by, As you are now, so once was I. As I am now, so you will be, So prepare for death & follow me.* (an unknown passer by scratched this reply below) *To follow you I'm not content. Until I know which way you went.*
- C. Slide6a Death should **energize you** not **paralyze you**.
1. Phil.1:20-26 *And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. 22 But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. 23 I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. 24 But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live. 25 Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith. 26 And when I come to you again, you will have even more reason to take pride in Christ Jesus because of what he is doing through me.*

D. Slide6b Death is not an *accident*, but an **appointment**.

1. Heb.9:27...*it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment*
2. So, we all must face honestly & soberly *The Last Enemy...DEATH*.
 - a) **Believers have this confidence**: Sins wages is death, the Gift of God is eternal life. Promise of resurrection to glory. To ever be with him. That where He is there we will be also. The sting of death is taken care of for us. [Unbelievers don't hav this confidence]
 - b) They say when death comes to a family it doesn't **create** problems, it **reveals** them.

E. Slide7 (4-6) **Lions** were respected as majestic, powerful predators. **Dogs** were looked down upon as *despised scavengers* (today we'd use...*well cat's*)

1. This group doesn't take the plunge into sin, they set their face to their goal, lean forward, & chant, *Where there is life, there's hope*.
2. I asked an old man I met in a hospital elevator, *how you doing? Well, I can still sit up & feed myself. It's a good day*.
3. We can learn from this to **seize opportunities while we live**.
 - a) Don't blindly hope for your future.
 - b) Death ends your opportunities here on earth. Like Jesus said *I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work*. Jn.9:4

IV. Slide8 **FACING LIFE (7-10)**

A. Slide9a **With Enjoyment**

1. Yes **death** is coming, **but** God gives us gifts to **enjoy** them.
2. **Note**: these things listed aren't *exotic pleasures in far away places*. **Instead** they are **common experiences of home life**. [feast, family, work]

B. The author's call to **enjoy life** does not grant permission to live in *self-indulgence*.

1. **We know** *pleasure for the sake of pleasure* provides no value.
2. **We know** a life of *wealth and possessions* does not guarantee happiness.
3. **We also note** **enjoyment** is **not** to be based on...*perfect circumstances in your life, or on him or on her, on a raise at work, on getting the house, on an individual in your past finally telling the truth, on a certain situation changing, on a turn of events, on a change of environment*.

4. **Rather**, this is an invitation to **enjoy life** to its fullest, **while** being content with what God has given, **while** recognizing God's supremacy & human limitation.

C. **Accepted ratsah** - often translated as *approved* - can also mean *to take pleasure in*.

1. The ability to enjoy life is not just a **gift** from God, **it is His desire**.

D. **Slide9b Enjoy Relaxing Meals** (7)

1. **Jews custom**: **Early snack**. **Brunch** (10-noon). And their **main meal** (sunset).

a) **Main meal**: after all work was done. Consisted of bread & wine, often milk & cheese, few veg's or fruit depending on season, sometimes fish (meat more expensive).

2. Solomon knew...**not all meals are enjoyed**.

3. Prov.15:17 **Better is a dinner of herbs/broccoli where love is, Than a fatted calf/steak with hatred**.

4. Prov.17:1 **Better is a dry morsel** (crouton) **with quietness, Than a house full of feasting with strife**.

a) **What was your most memorable meal?** (1st date, *Sea Fare Inn*, Whittier)

b) **What was your worst meal?** (when stomach in knots, couldn't enjoy)

5. Meals weren't only about food but **fellowship** – **It was a communal act of friendship & commitment**.

a) **Love is the most important thing on any family menu**. It turns an ordinary meal into a **banquet**.

E. **Slide9c Enjoy all Occasions** (8)

F. **Let your garments always be white & let your head lack no oil** – make every occasion a special occasion, even if its ordinary & routine. Phil.4:4 **Rejoice in the Lord always**.

G. The wealthy could afford to keep their garments white. The poor have to keep one set they only wear on special occasions (Haiti).

1. **White garments** became an emblem of Joy & Festivity.

2. Rev.3:4,5 **You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name**

from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

H. Slide9d Enjoy Your Marriage (9)

1. **Your vain life** - The word *hevel* literally means *breath* or *vapor*.
 - a) Normally the author uses this term to indicate *senselessness or absurdity*.
 - b) **Here**, the author uses its *literal* meaning to emphasize **the brevity of life**.
2. **Whom you love** – you may **fall out of like** with them, **but** the one in whom you've **covenanted to love**, *till death do you part*.
 - a) It is possible to feel you were **madly in love** with someone, when it is really just an attraction to someone who can meet your needs and address insecurities and doubts you have about yourself. And that kind of relationship, you will demand and control rather than serve and give.¹
 - (1) Must move from a *consumer relationship* to a **covenantal relationship**. One that doesn't promise their **current** love for each other, **but** one that covenants to be *loving, faithful, & true* to the other person **in the future**, regardless of undulating_(wave) **internal feelings** or **external circumstances**.
 - b) I love the illustration Timothy/Kathy Keller use in their book, *The Meaning of Marriage* (Read pg.153, Bridge Analogy)
 - (1) Like **Ulysses** putting wax in his **sailors** ears, tying himself to the mast, & telling his men to keep him on course whatever he yelled...to keep him from giving into the beautiful but dangerous **Sirens**. Your marriage cov, your oath to the world, your oath before God, keeps you **tyed to the mast until** your mind clears.
3. It might seem weird getting marriage counseling from one who abused its system. **Yet what he says about it is always true**. (inspired by the HS)
 - a) **Note**: it doesn't say, *Live joyfully with your wives*.
 - b) His **wives** seduced him away from the Lord, & he paid for it. **Maybe** this is his *later on in life* confession. *Now I know better!*

¹ Timothy/Kathy Keller, The Meaning of Marriage, pg.77.

I. Slide9e Enjoy Your Work (10)

1. The Jews saw work not as a **curse** but as **stewardship**.
2. This verse gives us **a great work ethic**.
 - a) Col.3:17 applies this to the N.T. Christian, *And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*
3. Have you exchanged **leisure meals**, for *fast food & fast schedules*?
4. Have you exchanged **enjoying all occasions**, for *living for the weekend*?
5. Have you exchanged **a faithful loving marriage**, for a *quick test drive with a different model*?
6. Have you exchanged **hard work**, for *shortcuts* to help you avoid work, & run after *Get rich quick schemes*?
 - a) Little brother found out in the prodigal parable, *Everything I really wanted was at home in my Fathers house.*

V. Slide10 FACING PROVIDENCE (11,12)

- A. Slide11 Life is **unpredictable**, but it need not be **irrational**.
- B. **Chance** pega - *occurrence or event*. Not *chance* like the role of the die.
 1. These **times & occurrences** lie beyond the control of man, & this is, in the final result, conditioned by **God**.
 2. Christians don't *lean on luck*, *nor champion for chance*, **because** our confidence is in the **loving Providence of God**.
- C. This verse provides more examples of *injustice: the swift should win the race, and the strong should win the battle*.
 1. However, this is not always the case. Often, **time and chance** affect the outcome more than skill or ability.
- D. Our **abilities** are no guarantee of **success**
 1. It is generally true that the fastest runner will win...**but**, we've seen **upsets**, like when I lost in a foot race to Dan Effinger 1998 family camp. *But I'm not bitter.*
 2. The strongest soldier or best equipped army wins the battle...**but**, we've seen **upsets**.

3. The best skilled gets the best jobs. **Yet**, the same gifted people can **miserably fail**.
 4. God is in control of **time & chance**/occurrence/events *in our lives*.
- E. (12) **You never know when your plans will be thwarted**.
1. Events happen all of a sudden, & your like a fish caught in a net.
 2. James 4:13-17 NLT *Look here, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit." How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog - it's here a little while, then it's gone. What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that." Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil. Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.*

VI. Slide12 **FACING FOLLY (13-18)**

- A. Slide13 Our **opportunities** are no guarantee of **success**.
- B. Here is an example that a battle is not always to the strong.
- C. Vs.14,15 is a *OT parable*.
 1. This wise poor man wasn't properly recognized for his victory. **But still wisdom is better than strength**. (16)
- D. (18b) **One sinner destroys much good** - yep, **just ask Adam & Eve**. **Just ask the spouse** that blew up their marriage. **Just ask the addict** that after months of sobriety returns to his crutch just one more time.
- E. Let God give you **wisdom** to use each day *profitably* for **His Glory**.