

Title: Life or Death

Text: Romans 5:12-15

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Place: Decatur Church of God

We really don't like talking about death. We don't like it, especially if we are talking about our own, or someone close to us.

TV, video games, and the movies have tried to inoculate our senses and create an ambivalent attitude toward the experience of death.

Our kids play games where they are shooting and killing the "bad" guys. We watch shows; some of them are the most highly rated on TV, where they begin with a gruesome murder or death. We have seen more reality than what is happening in reality.

What is it that we really should know about death?

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—

I. Death is a penalty that we pay because one man chose to be disobedient.

A. Adam chose to disregard the command of God and he brought sin into the world and brought death to all humankind.

Genesis 2:16-17

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; [17] but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

* There is an older movie that has been out for many years now called “City Slickers.” In the movie there is a grizzled old cow hand that is helping the dudes drive a herd of cattle from one place to another.

He keeps telling them as he holds up one finger that there is one thing. Billy Crystal playing one of the characters keeps asking him what that one thing is. To make matters worse, the old cowhand dies before he can tell them.

One thing!

One thing...one thing the Lord told Adam and Eve not to do and out of everything that they had in the Garden of Eden, they did the one thing God told them not eat.

How could they? How could they be so intentionally disobedient? How could they be so stupid? Oh, yeah...maybe you missed the end of that verse in Romans, *because all sinned*.

B. While death became a reality because of Adam’s sin, death becomes our penalty because of our own sin.

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 6:23a

For the wages of sin is death...

* Based upon my own life choices, I would have to admit that I too have sinned. I have been disobedient to God. Thus, I too face a death penalty.

* Now, I know that you would like to believe that your sin isn't so bad and that you really don't deserve a death penalty.

* Just think for a moment, what were some of the crimes through the years that called for death.

- ♥ Don't forget in the Old Testament that a child was to be stoned to death for being disrespectful and disobedient to their parents.
- ♥ The Code of Hammurabi set different punishments and compensation according to the different class/group of victims and perpetrators.
- ♥ The Torah (Jewish Law), also known as the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Christian Old Testament), lays down the death penalty for murder, kidnapping, magic, violation of the Sabbath, blasphemy, and a wide range of sexual crimes.
- ♥ In ancient China, strangulation was the prescribed sentence for lodging an accusation against one's parents or grandparents with a magistrate, scheming to kidnap a person and sell them into slavery and opening a coffin while desecrating a tomb. Decapitation was the method of execution prescribed for more serious crimes such as treason and sedition.

* I'm sure that we could find something that works for you.

II. Notice that sin occurs before Moses Law is ever written.

Romans 5:13

For before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.

A. Sin is not the result of breaking the Ten Commandments.

* Have you ever noticed where people go or what they talk about when someone brings up the topic of sin?

“I’m a pretty good guy. I’m not a murderer and I don’t steal. I haven’t committed adultery.”

But God tells us that sin has been from the beginning.

- ♥ Cain killed Abel
- ♥ Abraham lied about his wife
- ♥ Jacob stole his brother’s blessing
- ♥ Laban stole 7 years from the life of Jacob when he gave Leah instead of Rachel for Jacob’s wife.

Romans 5:14

Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

B. Of course some did break the commandments.

- ♥ Saul went to a witch/medium.
- ♥ David committed adultery with Bathsheba.
- ♥ David set the stage for the death of Uriah.
- ♥ Jezebel killed the prophets.
- ♥ Annas and Caiaphas had the King of Glory crucified.

What did you do?

III. Nevertheless, God does not leave us without hope.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A. We may be guilty of sin but we can receive the gift of God.

Romans 5:15

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and

the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

B. The trespass called for death.

* Did you know that by 1820 in Britain, there were 160 crimes that were punishable by death, including crimes such as shoplifting, petty theft, stealing cattle, or cutting down trees in a public place?

*Modern military organizations employed capital punishment as a means of maintaining military discipline. The Soviets, for example, executed 158,000 soldiers for desertion during World War II. In the past, cowardice, absence without leave, desertion, insubordination, looting, shirking under enemy fire and disobeying orders were often crimes punishable by death.

- a. Unforgiven sin called for death.
- b. Lack of reconciliation called for death.
- c. A missing justification called for death.
- d. Our trespass put us on the fast track for death, eternal death.

C. But God's grace given to us through the gift of Jesus Christ saved us from the sure penalty of death and instead provided us with the promise of eternal life.

* In his book *What Money Can't Buy*, Michael J. Sandel states, "There are some things money can't buy—but these days, not much." Almost everything is up for sale, and if you have enough funds, you can buy what you want. Sandel lists the following examples:

- ♥ *The right to jump to the head of the line at Universal Studios: \$149.* Vacationers at Universal Studios can buy a special Front of Line Pass that allows them to cut to the front on all rides, shows, and attractions.
- ♥ *A prison-cell upgrade: \$90 a night.* In some cities nonviolent offenders can pay for a clean, quiet jail cell, without any non-paying prisoners to disturb them.

- ♥ *The services of an Indian surrogate mother: \$8,000.* Western couples seeking surrogates increasingly outsource the job to India, and the price is less than one-third the going rate in the United States.
- ♥ *The right to shoot an endangered black rhino: \$250,000.* South Africa has begun letting some ranchers sell hunters the right to kill a limited number of rhinos, to give the ranchers an incentive to raise and protect the endangered species.
- ♥ *Access to the carpool lane while driving solo: about \$8.* Some cities try to ease traffic congestion by letting solo drivers pay to drive in carpool lanes.
- ♥ *Your doctor's cell phone number: \$1,500 and up per year.* A growing number of "concierge" doctors offer cell phone access and same-day appointments for patients willing to pay annual fees ranging from \$1,500 to \$25,000.
- ♥ *The right to emit a metric ton of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere: \$10.50.* The European Union runs a carbon-dioxide-emissions market that enables companies to buy and sell the right to pollute.
- ♥ *The right to immigrate to the United States: \$500,000.* Foreigners who invest \$500,000 and create at least 10 full-time jobs in an area of high unemployment are eligible for a green card.

Of course there's one thing that money still can't buy—salvation. Jesus paid for it with his own life, but it's offered to us as a free gift. Always been and always will be.

Jesus made the gift available but you must agree to receive it. What do you think? Life or death?

I invite you to choose life! Let me tell you how it is done!