

One More Day to Live!

Many preachers have preached lessons on the subject, “If I Had Only One More Sermon to Preach,” or on the subject, “If this were My Last Sermon.” Usually such lessons are thought-provoking, faith-strengthening, informative, and very fundamental in nature.

But most of our readers are not preachers. However, all of us have been given (for a time) the breath of life, which sooner or later will take its exit from our corporeal bodies. If the Lord doesn’t come first, each of us will be whisked away from our earthly tabernacle by that “grim reaper” called “death.” cf. Heb. 9:27. Of course, for the faithful Christian, death is not the horrible monster that many consider it to be; rather it is the vestibule to a happier, more victorious existence and relationship. Cf. Rev. 14:13.

We do not know how long we will be permitted to inhabit this mundane sphere. However, most of us view our own departure as being “off yonder” in the future, seldom seriously considering the fact that it might be today or tomorrow! But let us assume that we were able to peer into the proverbial “crystal ball,” and, in so doing, we beheld the startling announcement, “tomorrow, **you** will die!” Tomorrow? Why that leaves only today! What would you do?

1. With “tomorrow I must die” on their minds, many deserting fathers (or mothers) would hasten home to make amends and seek to provide their families with a better memory than that of broken promises, shattered dreams, and “it-might-have-been” illusions. They would dread dying in a “*denied the faith*,” and in a “*worse than an infidel*” condition. I Tim. 5:8.

2. With “tomorrow I must die” on their minds, many wayward, former parent-disrespecting children would place hasty calls “back home” to assure their worried parents of their love and express sorrow for their worldly lives. Suddenly “*honor thy father and mother*,” Eph. 6:2, would become more meaningful than ever!

3. With “tomorrow I must die” on their minds, sinners, in a desperate hope that they haven’t waited too late, would hasten to obey the gospel. They would not need the former coaxing, pleading, and exhortation. In fact, “hypocrites in the church” would immediately cease to be a deterrent, because to them, the **Gospel** would finally be recognized as “the *power of God unto salvation*,” Rom. 1:16. Note: I am not teaching the concept of “death-bed-repentance” (if there be such a thing); I’m only suggesting their probable course of action.

4. With “tomorrow I must die” on their minds, unfaithful members of the church would make desperate attempts to right wrongs so as to be in favor with both God and man. The fact that “they aren’t friendly,” “I’ve been offended,” and “I’m as good as some of them are” (former obstacles of major proportions) would be completely overlooked. If “tomorrow” happened to fall on Thursday, they would even attend Wednesday night Bible study. They would not want to face God in a “*lukewarm*,” or having left their “*first love*” condition, Rev. 3:15-16; 2:4-5.

5. “With tomorrow I must die” on their minds, estranged members of the church would “forgive and forget,” expressing their love for one another, knowing that “*he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen*” does not love God, Whom he has not seen, I John 4:20. Divisive “cliques in the church” would dissolve, and slanderous, behind-the-back, knife-in-the-back whispered innuendos would be retracted, followed by volunteered apologies sincerely given in the awareness that “*love thinketh no evil*,” I Cor. 13:5.

6. With “tomorrow I must die” on their minds, many members of the church, who formerly could not “do personal work,” would cease asking “*am I my brother’s keeper,*” Gen. 4:9, and at least **try** to teach someone else, having at last reached the conclusion that “*every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away,*” John 15:2.

Yes, with “tomorrow I must die on their minds, a multitude of people would make all-out, past-rejected efforts to “*walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time,*” Eph. 5:15-16. But what about the faithful child of God? What would be his course of action? He could rejoice in his confidence that upon the dissolution of the “*earthly house of this tabernacle*” that he has “*a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,*” 2 Cor. 5:1. The time between now and tomorrow would not be a period of fretful, desperate, last-minute, crammed, make-up fearful activity. Today, he would continue being faithful. Perhaps tonight, he would pillow his head with the usual petitions unto God, and then sleep well. Tomorrow, he will “*depart...to be with Christ, which is far better,*” Phil. 1:23.

Friend, if the “tomorrow-I-must-die” awareness would provoke you to engage in the action described in the numbered paragraphs (1-6), then you should start now, because, indeed, tomorrow you **might** die! On the other hand, if you should live many years yet, you should still take correct action now because the Lord demands obedience in love, John 14:15, and “*from the heart,*” Rom. 6:17-18 — not from fretful, doubtful desperation! We should have the attitude expressed by Jesus: “*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work,*” John 9:4.

*** —B. Witherington

A Gospel Meeting Which Lasted Two Months!

Earlier this past week I was looking at a July 13, 1966 issue of the **Haldeman Avenue Visitor,**” a weekly bulletin I edited from June 1965 to June 1971, while laboring as evangelist with the Haldeman Avenue church of Christ in Louisville, Ky. In that particular issue special mention was made of the passing of Mary Craft Alton, the oldest member of that congregation, and who was the widow of a Union soldier who fought in the Civil War! He had preceded her in death by many years. Of special significance as it relates to this article is paragraph number three, which reads as follows:

“By way of interest it is well to state that sis. Alton was baptized into Christ during a Gospel meeting that lasted from April 5-June 7, 1891, in which bro. T.B. Larrimore did the preaching. During this meeting 70 were baptized, 20 were identified, 10 were restored and three were converted from the denominations — making a total of 108 ‘responses.’ She was a member of the old Campbell St. church before the congregation moved into its new meeting house at this location in 1923.”

During my lifetime gospel meetings have gotten progressively shorter in length. A ten day meeting during my earlier years as a preacher was not uncommon. Then they were shortened to one week. Now many are content with “weekend” meetings, and even then they don’t want a “long winded preacher.” But a meeting lasting two months, with a preacher who often preached for an hour or more each time! Who could tolerate that?

I will be first to admit, “times have changed.” People now-a-days have so much to cram into their schedules, that they can not contemplate having gospel meetings lasting two months! But the big difference between now and then is this: People, generally speaking, don’t have as much of a **spiritual appetite** as in former days. Consequently, they want shorter sermons, shorter meetings, and they become discouraged when most gospel meetings conclude with zero baptisms

and zero restorations.

Growing up on a farm, I learned that there is a connection between the amount of seed that is sown and the size of the harvest which follows. The word of God is likened to “*seed*,” I Peter 1:23, and the gospel seed will still produce a harvest when it is sown into the soil of “*honest and good*” hearts, Luke 8:15 . But good seed left “*in the barn*,” Hag. 2:19, produces no harvest. As Christians, we must do more by way of sowing the gospel seed, and we could all well afford to examine our own spiritual appetites. If we genuinely “*hunger and thirst after righteousness*,” Matt. 5:6, and if we have a passion for lost souls, we will allot more time for Bible study (both public and private), and we will do more by way of sharing God’s word with the lost. Though it seems unthinkable, can you imagine what would happen at Seffner if we had a gospel meeting that lasted over two months? On the other hand, think of the thrill of witnessing over 100 “responses” to the gospel in a time period of only two months!

**** - Bobby Witherington