

One Minute After You Die

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[0 : 00] I want you to turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, 2 Corinthians chapter 5. By the way, the deacons got a unanimous vote. Man, a unanimous vote in a Baptist church is an amazing thing.

That is an amazing thing, so I appreciate you affirming that. When we surrender our lives to the Lord Jesus, we are forever changed.

I'm not speaking of a small change. It's a big change. It's a complete transformation. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17 says, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. Now, when it says the new has come, some of that newness comes immediately.

In this world. Because when we're saved, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit over the sinful nature that not only we've inherited, but also that we've fed along the way, that we're guilty of.

[1 : 17] And now, because of the Holy Spirit, we have the strength to say no to temptation that hits us. And to walk away from that sin that so, as the Hebrew writer said, so easily entangles us.

We have the power of the Holy Spirit of God in us. Christian, if you are still walking in the same sinful patterns that you were walking before you gave your heart and life to Christ, if you are a child of God, you have the power of God in you to rise above that, to say no to that, to walk away from that, to gain victory of that in Christ.

We are changed people. We are new creations. Additionally, there are even more benefits that are beyond this world.

Now, there's a lot you will hear from folks about the moment after you die. People on their deathbed, slipping from this life into the next.

Some of those common threads are there's a dark tunnel. There's a light at the end of that tunnel. There's then somehow, some way they've been turned away and they've come back.

[2 : 35] There always seems to be this warm and breezy sensation as they head toward the light. I have never heard someone say, however, that they were near death and walked right into hell and the devil turned them away.

You never hear that. You never hear them talk about that. It's always heaven that they're going to. And seldom is there radical change in the lives of those testimonies in which they've heard.

The Apostle Paul said that he knew a man that went to the third heaven. When he says the third heaven, that means, and we'll get into this later, but the first heaven is when you go out today and look up. That's what you see, the first heaven.

If we have a clear night tonight when you look up and see the stars, that's the second heaven.

Okay. The third heaven is where the Lord dwells.

The promised eternity that we have. He said, I knew a man that went to the third heaven. Sounds like he's talking about himself. But he said he couldn't even discuss it. Couldn't even talk about it. And so when they come back and write books about it, I get a little skeptical.

[3 : 40] You know? Matter of fact, years ago, a child had some kind of near-death experience and came back and a book was written about it. And come to find out after millions of copies or at least a bunch were sold that it was all made up along the way.

But they made a lot of money off of it. It's interesting how that happens. I know a man who has been to, he's with the Lord now, but he went to death's door several times with heart ailments.

We were talking about this one day and he said, you know, preacher, looking back, they had me on so much stuff that I think my near-death experience might have been a drug-induced state.

Now, I'm not taking away from what somebody else has experienced and don't want to get into all that. Okay? Maybe so. But the testimonies of people who have near-death is, this is what I want

you to get, is not how I know what is coming.

Okay? I know what's coming because the Bible tells me so. And so there's a lot of understandings of heaven and of hell and near-death and all that stuff that you may have heard.

[5 : 01] But I want to be clear, we're going to spend several weeks on this. And throughout those several weeks, we will take time to better grasp the reality of eternity.

But I'm not talking about something that's wispy or whimsical. It's factual and it's biblical. Today, I want to begin this series by talking about what you will know firsthand one minute after you die. Now, the truth is, that's a conservative estimate. Because it's probably much quicker than that. But at least in the first minute, you'll know these things.

You may have doubts and wonderings here. That's pretty common. But I assure you, you will not there. One minute after you die, you will know that eternity is immediate.

Eternity is immediate. James chapter 4 verse 14 says, What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. And I will promise you, when it does, you will be thrust into eternity immediately.

[6 : 24] There you will stand before the gate of pearl and glory or the horrible gates of hell. Now, some have said that's not the case. There's many solutions to that.

And one of them, and some of these come in Christian circles, one of them is soul sleep. And soul sleep is the idea that until the Lord comes back, the soul simply waits upon him.

Now, I'll tell you what that comes from. It's a misinterpretation of the words of Jesus. In John 11 verse 11, he spoke of Lazarus. And he said that Lazarus was sleeping.

Paul describes Christians in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 as those who sleep in Jesus. Now, I want to be clear about both those statements.

The only thing that sleeps upon your death is this old body. The soul does not sleep. It rests. It rests. It rests from strife and labor of this earth.

[7 : 30] But it does that in the presence of God, if you're a Christian. And upon his return, we are reunited with our body. But look, if you're like me, don't be discouraged by that because it's going to be a glorified body.

Okay? You know? I'm going to be buff and beautiful. It will be made perfect in eternity. The soul slips one thought.

Another thought is purgatory. And purgatory, Scripture is, it comes from this. Scripture is clear that one must be perfect to get to heaven.

Jesus said that in Matthew 5. And that leads to a problem, folks. Because I'm far from perfect. And in case you're feeling robust this morning, you're far from perfect.

We're all far from perfect. However, when asked who could be saved, Jesus said in Matthew chapter 19, with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

[8 : 34] It is the blood of Christ that makes us righteous. We just got done studying Abraham. Hebrews says that Abraham was righteous because God credited him with righteousness because he was obedient.

So it's not that his obedience was perfect. We studied that. You ought to know that. His obedience wasn't perfect by any means, but he was credited righteousness. The blood of Christ is what makes us righteous.

He died as the perfect one and became the substitute to God for all the imperfect ones that would trust him for salvation. Purgatory is this idea that we must work to earn our salvation.

Now listen, if you've got to do anything to earn your salvation, that means that somehow you've got to make up for what the cross don't cover. And I got news for you, friend. The cross covers it all.

The only hope we have is in Christ on the cross. And because of that, we rest completely in that.

There's nothing we can do to make up the difference. However, those that think of purgatory believe that somehow you have to make up this difference.

[9 : 49] And how you do that? You confess your sin. You confess your sin. The other way you do that is by taking sacraments. And they call those means of grace.

Now, I don't want to get into all those theological things, but I'll tell you, sacraments, one of the sacraments that we'd be familiar with is somewhat like the Lord's Supper. And some people take it weekly because they think it's a requirement in order to maintain their salvation.

And so they take it weekly in order to be able to do that because it keeps you right with God. And so what happens when you don't do that?

What happens when you got sin that you haven't confessed to somebody else who's a standby for God? What happens when you hadn't taken a sacrament?

What happens when there's sin that's not been dealt with in those theological patterns? I shouldn't have to take this, but I will take this. I want to be clear about something.

[10:52] The only hope you have for forgiveness and salvation is through the cross of Christ. And I thank God for what 1 John 1, 9 says when it says that if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You know, if he was willing to do it but couldn't do it, we'd be in a mess. And if he could do it but he wouldn't do it, we'd be in a mess. But thank God he can do it and he will do it.

And what I love about it is, is that if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us, listen to this, from all unrighteousness. So if I were to tell you to go home and write your sins down today, nobody else going to look at it?

You just get honest with God and write all your sins down, okay? There ain't enough paper in Pickens County to cover us, okay? But if you write down everything you can think of, you've got so good at sinning that you're not going to come up with all of it.

What I love about that passage is it says that if we wholeheartedly confess our sin to God, confess their means to agree with God in our sin.

[11:58] Not to do it in passing, but to realize the weight of our sin, the things that you consider little white sins, the things that we consider big sins, the weight of your sin, or even one of them, sent Christ to the cross.

When you agree with God on the weight of your sin, he cleans your slate. The stuff that you're so good at, you don't even think about anymore.

He'll clean your slate. You'll wash clean. Just a little excursion to remind you where I stand on things, okay? But some believe that you have to do that by confessing it to somebody else.

Some believe you have to do that by taking part in sacraments that are means of grace. I'll tell you what the means of grace is. The means of grace is the cross of Christ.

That's the means of grace, period. And if you don't do those things, or if you're missing something, or you've got unconfessed sin, that sin and purgatory has to be, this is the belief, has to be purged out in some type of temporary hell until it's no longer remaining, and then you've earned the right for heaven.

[13:16] I hope you understand all that's wrong with such a theology as that. You can't earn your way to heaven. Jesus earned your way to heaven. Jesus died in your place.

Only hope you have is in Christ, period. Yes, you need to confess your sins. If you can't stop sinning what you're doing, and you need to find somebody else to mentor you through that, then confess it to somebody else and let them walk through that with you.

But the only person that can forgive you is the Lord Jesus Christ, period. That's the only hope you have for forgiveness, is through him. And so you walk away from that sin. You agree with him on that sin.

You celebrate the Lord's Supper with us. Because he told us to do it regularly and to remember him in that way. Because we honor him. We're being obedient when we do that.

That's why we do those things. Baptism. We're going to celebrate baptism next week. It's going to be a cool event. I'm excited about it. We're going to celebrate baptism. Baptism. And I told the baptismal candidates.

[14:13] I said, I want you to know, when somebody asks you when you got saved, don't tell them you got baptized at Camp McCall. Don't tell them that. Tell them when you got saved. Because that water is not going to do anything but tell everybody else what's already happened in your heart.

You tell them when you got saved. You tell them about that camp experience. You tell them about when you were a child. You tell them how you got saved. Then you can say, you know what? And I followed that up by letting people know.

And I was baptized. And I said, it was cool. You can say all that. But don't you dare say, when did you get saved? I got baptized back in 23. Who gives a rip?

We can baptize you every year. But you're only going to get saved once. By the way, I ain't going to baptize you every year. So, just for the record. But anyway. But the thought is that they can purge their sin in some temporary.

Hell and then earn their right to go to heaven. Isn't that beautiful? The problem is it's not biblical. It's not biblical. It's contrary to the belief that we are justified.

[15 : 19] Which means made right in God's eyes. By Christ and not ourselves. And because it's not biblical, it makes it bogus. Third thought is this. Others believe that you go to paradise.

And they would describe paradise as this intermediate state. Before you are reunited with a glorified body. Scripture speaks of paradise.

When Jesus said to the thief on the cross, you shall be with me today in paradise. But if it's as I've seen it defined, there's a problem there.

For one, number one, Christ is there. Okay? And Hebrews chapter 1 verse 3 tells us that after the ascension, that Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father.

To make intercession for the saints. In heaven. So, where Christ is, is heaven. He said the same thing in Luke chapter 22 verse 69. So, listen, if Jesus is there, and the Father is there, and heaven is God's home, then paradise is heaven.

[16 : 32] Now, I want to be clear about something. It's going to get even better when all the saints come home. But paradise is heaven. I think heaven is now somewhat like, in a much more glorified state, somewhat like we are in the sanctuary about five minutes till the hour.

Okay? I mean, we see in folks, and we fellowship and all that stuff, you know. It's good. It's good. I enjoy that time, you know. I'm torn weekly between going in that room and praying with deacons and visiting with folks out here.

I think it's important, and I've asked them to do it, to pray for me before we go out. And so, they pray for me in the family room right before I go out. That's why I usher into that. Sometimes I never make it in there.

Sometimes they have to pray without me. Because I get so caught up with the people, because I love that. Okay? That's just like a foretaste. Okay? There's going to be a day when all God's saints come home.

And when they do, worship's going to start. And that's when the real thing kicks. You get the difference? I always compared it to going to mama's to eat, you know. She'd be cutting out ham, and I'd get trimmings off that ham, check her out, make sure it was good enough for everybody else to eat.

[17 : 45] I'm willing to do that kind of thing for folks. And you can tell. But it really gets sweet when the whole family gets there, and we join hands on a circle and pray to God.

That's when it, well, for a little while, you know. It's like a typical family. But anyway. But that's when it gets sweet. And so there's coming a day when we'll all be home. And in the meantime, they're just getting ready.

They're just tuning the instruments to prepare for what Scripture calls the marriage supper of the Lamb. But be clear.

We who are Christians will behold the lovely face of God immediately. Those without Christ will face hell immediately.

Their doom is faced immediately. Second thing you'll know one minute after you die is that eternity is real.

[18 : 51] It's real. Many believe that heaven is some cultural appeasement, some kind of made-up utopia to ease the fear of death. Those same may believe that hell is just a made-up threat to kind of jar somebody to get something right in their life or to follow some religious pattern of sorts.

In some minds, it may be. But the reality is the eternity that Scripture teaches of is real. And Scripture again and again points to the reality of hell.

And if you're one of those folks that say, yeah, but I just pay attention to what Jesus said. Be careful. Okay? Be careful. Period. For that kind of theology. Because the truth of the Holy Spirit of God working and moving in the God-breathed Word of God works throughout Scripture.

Period. Okay? Everywhere. The words that Paul wrote down on a page are just as inspired by the Holy Spirit of God as the red letters are.

Okay? But if you're struggling with whether there's a reality of hell, just look at the red letters. Okay? Because Jesus is clear about it.

[20 : 04] Jesus spends more time talking about hell and money than he does just about anything else. And y'all don't want to hear either one of them, do you? But the reality is what he deals with. Because he wants us warned about what's coming.

Christ warned us of the reality of hell. And Luke chapter 16 speaks of the rich man in hell in agony, begging for mercy. Revelation 21 is a clear revelation of what God wanted John to know about heaven.

You can throw the Bible out. You can call it unreal. You can call it irrelevant. You can forget about heaven and hell. Although the truth and the existence of heaven and hell will not go away.

Even if you say, preacher, I'm not going to believe that. Well, I promise you. I promise you, one minute after you die, you'll know eternity is real.

But if you believe the Bible is the inspired God-breathed word, God's revelation to us, you'll have to believe in the glory of heaven and the agony of hell. You'll have to.

[21 : 12] W.A. Crystal, classic pastor, served in First Baptist Dallas from the 50s until the end of the century, said this. Unfortunately, the only conclusion conceivable is that those who are blood-bought sinners whose names are entered into the book of life are saved, while others are forever excluded.

This was not God's design for man. The everlasting fires of hell were prepared for the devil and his angels. Matthew 25 verse 41 says that. But God is so gracious that he never coerces anyone to be the object of his affection and adore him.

If there is rejection of his overtures, then the only option is the place called hell. Tragically, it is the destination of most.

I get people that ask me sometimes, preacher, why would a loving God send anyone to hell? He wouldn't. And he never will. He gives us a choice. And if we refuse to submit to his lordship, we will live with the eternal consequences forever.

Hell was not made for man. It was made for a rebellious devil and his angels. But when sin entered in, eternal separation and condemnation entered in.

[22 : 37] It is only removed by accepting the sacrifice of Christ with your submission to his lordship. Life is not over when you die. It is simply a transfer into eternity.

A real and certain one. To close your eyes in death is to open them instantly in eternity. You'll know one minute.

I believe one second. But I'll say one minute for sure. Because I ain't been there. That eternity is real. Third thing is this.

One minute after you die, you'll know that eternity is beyond your imagination. Scripture gives details of heaven, especially in Revelation 21.

And we're going to dig it apart, folks. But there's other clues as well throughout Scripture. And when the passages of hell are combined together, it makes for a horrid but very clear picture.

[23 : 45] However, I will be clear. It is still beyond your imagination. It is still beyond your comprehension. Even the words that we could speak to describe it.

Because we have finite minds. And we have finite language. We have finite intellect. And it is so far inferior and impoverished compared to what is to come that we can only begin to understand.

We're going to spend several weeks exploring the Bible, looking for the reality of eternity. But the grand expanse of heaven will be beyond us when we get to the end of this.

I promise you. The agony of hell is too terrible to picture. When you know all there is to know about heaven and hell on this earth, it will only be a fraction of the whole truth.

It will simply be a dim reflection of the breathtaking reality. We have never experienced anything like the victory of heaven.

[25 : 00] Never. I like what John MacArthur said about it. He said this. Listen to this. The best of our spiritual experiences here are only samples of heaven. Our highest spiritual heights.

The profoundest of all of our joys and the greatest of our spiritual blessings will be normal in heaven. When we consider that Christ prayed for all who know him to spend eternity with him in unbroken fellowship, John 17 verse 24, our hearts should overflow with gratitude and expectation. I want you to listen to Ezekiel, the prophet Ezekiel, who saw a vision of heaven. And I want you to listen to how he tries to describe it, the stammering in which he tries to describe it.

He says in Ezekiel chapter 1 verse 26 and it says this, And above the expanse over their heads there was like the likeness of a throne, excuse me, the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire.

He sounds like a teenager. Man, it was like this and it was like that and it was like that.

[26 : 14] He was baffled by even being attempted, as I was baffled by trying to read what he said, he was baffled by even attempting to explain it. And what about hell?

Can we get a clear picture of what a dark, yet fiery, bottomless pit, yet lake of fire where God's presence has never graced it? Can we get a clear picture of what that'll be like?

When Jesus described it, he normally used the Greek word Gehenna. And ge in that word means valley.

And Hinnah was short for Hinnom. He was speaking of the valley of Hinnom. And Gehenna was the trash dump outside the city of Jerusalem.

It's where they dumped the trash in that valley. It's also where they would take criminal bodies that had been executed and they would throw them in that valley.

[27 : 28] The cultic sacrifices that would kill folks. For their gods would many times dump those sacrificed bodies into that valley.

And for sanitation purposes in that valley, they would keep a fire going. That they would constantly feed with more trash. So because the trash was there, the worms were there.

And for sanitation purposes, the fire was there. And so Jesus referred to hell as Gehenna. It'd be like living your life in that pit. And he said, where the fire never goes out and the worm never dies.

That was the most graphic illustration on this earth that he could describe what hell would be like. I want you to think about your spiritual mountaintop experience.

Best time you ever had enraptured in the presence of God. When God moved in your life and you felt a strong sense of his presence. I want you to know that's a down day in heaven.

[28 : 42] And I want you to think about the worst in this life you've experienced. That you would say, Preacher, it was like hell for me that day.

I want you to know that's just a fraction of all eternity. It is beyond us.

I will do my best to dig out what scripture says about heaven and about hell. But I promise you when we get to the end of this, we'll still only see a fragment.

Just a crack in the door to what it really is. Fourth and last thing. One minute after you die, you will know eternity is your future.

It will be personalized for you immediately. You can believe it or not believe it. But I promise you, if you don't believe now, you will then.

[29 : 57] There are no atheists in hell. When they got there, they started believing. How does that make you feel? Are you ready?

Are you living like you're ready to die? Are you? One of my favorite preachers is a man named Steve Brown. Steve Brown says many people have told him that they wonder what it will be like when they die.

not so much in the manner in which they die because I always say, you know, I want to die like my grandpa who died in his sleep instead of all the people in the car with him that was yelling all the way.

But anyway. So it's not so much in the manner that we wonder about but the feeling. Seeing it coming.

When the breath ceased here, he says, I've seen many die and I can assure you, you will die as you have lived.

[31 : 20] If eternity is your future and it is, are you ready for it? If you were to die today and that's not a threat, it's just a question.

If you were to die today and you were to stand before God and he were to ask you why should I let you into my heaven, what do you think you'd say? I asked a guy that one time.

I said, if you were to die today and ask the Lord and you were to stand before God and he would ask you why should I let you into my heaven, what do you think he'd say? He said, please. That ain't the right answer.

If there's anything you would say besides I know for certain that I've surrendered my heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, and I gave him control of my life, I surrendered to him and because of what he did for me on the cross, I know I'll spend eternity with him.

If you'll say anything else, it's the wrong answer and you need to make it right today by saying, dear Lord, I know I'm a sinner and I know my sin has separated me from you and I ask you to forgive me and come into my life and from this day forward I commit my life to follow you, to live for you.

[32 : 50] Second thing is this, have you done what he's told you to do? Have you been faithful with the opportunities that he's given you?

Are you ready? You need to be because we don't know what tomorrow holds but thank God we know who holds tomorrow.

With every head bowed and every eye closed, I want you to know I prayed for you, maybe not by name, a lot of you I prayed by name but I prayed for you this week that God would work and move in our midst during this time that if you don't know the Lord you'll come to know him today.

Don't think that church membership, don't think that baptism, don't think that the Lord's supper, don't think that a good godly heritage is enough for you.

It's a personal surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. Today, if you need to be saved you ask the Lord Jesus to save you.

[34 : 08] He will. I'll be happy to guide you in that you come. Maybe you're here and you've done that privately but you've never done it publicly and you need to do it. So I encourage you to come and to acknowledge that publicly.

Maybe you're here and God's leading you to be a part of this church and you know that. I encourage you to just simply be obedient to do what he's asked you to do or maybe maybe this morning you just need to get some things right.

When wasting opportunities you need to get things right. Make it right today. Heavenly Father I love you and I thank you Lord for your love for us. I ask dear God that you will lead us right now to simply be obedient and follow what you'd have us to do.

In Jesus precious name. Amen. If you