

Death Is Inevitable
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Opening Illustration

Funeral for a turtle.

Introduction

We are all affected by death. People we know and love have already or will die one day. You and I will die as well. We can't avoid it, postpone or negotiate it. We are all confronted by death and how we respond to it now is critical to how we live.

Three Ways We Are Confronted by Death

1. The consequence of sin is death.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—¹³for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

Romans 5:12-13

Death is inevitable. We will all face it. Death shows us how one man's actions will adversely affect others lives.

And to Adam he said, "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Genesis 3:19

Death, we can't ignore it or deny it but this morning, let's look it straight in the eye. I've done several funerals since coming to Milton. I've walked with people through the grief and loss of a loved one. I've silently stood beside them when words went missing. Those are times we will all face sooner or later.

The Bible doesn't avoid death, minimize it or hide from it. Death is spoken of throughout the Scriptures.

⁴⁸ What man can live and never see death? Psalm 89:48

*And just as **it is appointed for man to die once**, and after that comes judgment, Hebrews 9:27*

Death is found in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. It came to us when one man chose to sin and disobey God. From then on sin and death was passed down to us. God wanted life for His creation and put the tree of life in the centre of the garden, yet Adam chose the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and that choice affected us throughout history. It is the sad refrain of what might have been instead of what has become. Death is ours and none of us can resist its relentless call on us.

Illustration

The legend of the merchant's servant of Bagdad.

2. The effect of sin is universal.

Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. 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! Romans 5:14-15

Adam, by his sin, brought universal ruin on the human race.

Paul said that death reigned from Adam to Moses. We aren't born innocent and then decide to sin because of some external factor. Sin is hardwired into our DNA because we come from Adam and at birth, we have inherited his sin nature. What Adam began has come down into the lives of every descendant.

Physical death for Adam was the penalty for his sin. Just like Adam, physical death is the penalty for our sins as well. We all die because of our sin nature that separates us from God. No one except Jesus is exempt from it. Death is the penalty of sin.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

Death is also the symbol of spiritual death, man's ultimate separation from God. In this way Adam by his sin brought

universal destruction on mankind. We all sin and face death as the consequence. Unless those sins are paid for.

Death spread to all people. The word is *Dierchomai* and it means to pass through as on a journey. Because of Adam's sin, death passed through on its journey through every heart in every generation. No one has escaped its unwelcome presence.

Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. ¹⁰ As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." Romans 3:10-12

Death is the guest no one wants, no one invites in, and no one wants to stay, yet it marches on. It spares no one on its advance. We have all sinned in our hearts and minds and equally guilty before God.

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? Romans 6:16

We all make the choice in life to give ourselves to sin which leads to death or to obedience which leads to righteousness.

Illustration

The top Five Regrets of the Dying.

3. The result of sin is condemnation.

¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. Romans 5:16

Paul makes it clear that condemnation is the effect of sin in our lives. To my knowledge none of us has been condemned by the courts in Canada. To be condemned is to receive the death penalty. The word is *kata-krima*, and it means to be damnable. Originally the word *krino* meant to make an assessment about a matter. Over time it became part of the terminology in the legal system and meant passing judgment. Then it meant to condemn.

The picture Paul was painting in Romans 5 above was that one trespass or sin brought condemnation upon a person. Not only have we inherited our sin nature from Adam, but we have all on our own sinned at one time or another. Therefore, we all stand condemned and have no hope unless God shows us mercy.

For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. James 2:13

Illustration

Our aim is off.

God's Generous Freedom from Death

God's Gift of Grace offers an alternate ending.

For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one-man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. Romans 5:17-18

The New Testament reminds us that God did in fact show us mercy when He sent Jesus Christ into the world. Jesus did not enter our world to condemn us but to save us.

*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.
John 3:17*

Because of Jesus' death, spiritual death and condemnation are no longer our only end. Jesus' death on the cross matters because He frees us from the spiritual death, condemnation and separation that would have awaited us.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2

Closing Illustration

What will you say at that time of death?