

Ministry on Hebrews

Part 9

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[00:00:00] As most of you realize, commencing last night, we are spending the week, if the Lord will, looking at some of the significant words and phrases in the Epistle to the Hebrews. And tonight, in the Gospel, I feel it right that we should single out the word and the thought, death.

I would say, in almost every home represented here, somewhere in the home there will be a tract with the title, A Preacher of the Old School.

And of course, it's speaking about death.

[00:01:06] On many subjects, you know, there are what are, in a fancy way, called euphemisms. I don't want to blind you with words. Tell you what that word means to me. It's putting a nice word to something that's nasty, so that it doesn't sound as nasty as it really is.

I'll give you one example, then move on.

It's fashionable to talk about things that are wrong, things that people do that they shouldn't do, as indiscretions. I'm sure you've heard the word. Now that's not a bad sort of word. [00:02:01] In fact, I'm maybe not quite sure what it means, and therefore, I can't put too much in store by it.

But instead of indiscretion, the euphemism, I say what the act really is, sin. Oh, that's a nasty word, about a nasty deed that God abhors.

Let us speak plainly about what we mean. Well, death makes people feel uncomfortable.

And even amongst unbelievers, no claim to be Christian or religious in any way, people talk about going over to the other side.

And that's a Bible image, you know, crossing the river, going over to the other side, arriving [00:03:01] at the desired haven.

Putting it plainly, they're speaking about death. Now, I don't want to treat this in any morbid way.

And as often, if I'm speaking from a certain book, taking a subject or a word from the book, I feel it's right to scan through the whole of the book just to get the feel of what the writer is saying about the subject. So I spent a little time this afternoon scanning through the epistle to the Hebrews, and as far

as I could see, there are at least 23 verses which refer to death or dying or things or people being dead.

And two of those verses mention death or dying twice over, so in all, there are about 25 [00:04:09] references to death. I won't have time, I wouldn't want to refer to every one. I'm going to concentrate on chapter two. If you want to know one of the main features of Hebrews chapter two, it's about death. And we'll come to some aspects of that in a moment. Now, there are five references to death. Pick up your Bible again. Verse nine, the suffering of death. Again towards the end of the verse, tasting death. Fourteen, through death and the power of death. And verse 15, the fear of death. Now I don't want to take them in that order. I want to take them in a slightly different order. [00:05:02] I want to speak first of all about the phrase in verse 14, the power of death.

The power of death in this world is, at least as far as God permits it, it's Satan's power.

Satan is the God of this world, the prince of the power of the air. And Satan influences people's thinking by wielding the power of death. I want to move quickly on for that. I have better, more positive, constructive things to say on this matter of death. But because Satan exercises, without people realizing it, subconsciously, this power [00:06:08] over them, men are in fear of death. That's my second thing. If the power of death is Satan's, the fear of death is the portion of those who don't believe the gospel.

Maybe there are many unbelievers who don't realize that all their lifetime they are subject to bondage.

One of Satan's great devices is to deceive people that he, the devil, doesn't even exist.

And he puts such a shroud of mystery over death, deceives people into talking about [00:07:02] reincarnation, coming back in another form, behave yourself, you'll come back as an angel, misbehave and you'll be a frog. And so, the mind of man, under the control of Satan, runs riot.

Subconsciously, instinctively, there is fear of death. And because of that, there is the fear of even considering death.

I'm glad this is the book which talks about people's attitude in the light of death.

[00:08:02] The best examples of anything we want to say are always found in the Bible. Bible examples are best. When we get as far as chapter 11, we read about people who had no fear of death because they were in touch with God.

Enoch, we read, had no fear of death.

He walked with God and God took him and it's not a euphemism, it's not a nice word about a nasty thing, it's a nice word about a wonderful thing. Three times in a verse in the chapter 11, God says, Enoch was translated. People complain the word rupture is not in the Bible. [00:09:04] I say it is.

First Thessalonians chapter 4, catching away, rupture. Here's another word for it in chapter 11, Enoch was translated. What does that word mean? He was transferred to another place, from earth to heaven. It would be valid if you trust the Savior, if your sins are forgiven, be quite valid in view of

death for you to say, I'm going to be transferred to another place. In the language of Hebrews, I'm going to a better place to be with Christ, which is far, far better.

John Wesley, wasn't it, who said, our people, meaning our Christian people, our people die [00:10:07] well. No fear of death.

Saying with this armist, it shall be well for them that trust the Lord. Oh, do you trust the Lord? How simple the language of Scripture. It shall be well with them that trust the Lord, no fear of death for those who trust the Savior.

Again in chapter 11, we read of Jacob. He knew he was dying. Scripture says while he was dying, what did he do? He blessed his grandsons, Joseph's sons, and it says he worshiped, leaning on the top [00:11:02] of his staff. Oh, do you know, have you seen believers die?

What a composure.

The nearest relative to me, whose presence I've been in when they were dying was my mother, who in her 90th year said, the Lord's been good to me, all my family are saved, and I'm ready to go.

Oh, that's reproduced thousands and thousands of times, the language of the soul that knows it shall be well because they've trusted the Lord. Fear of death where Christ is not known, no fear of death where the Savior has been trusted. [00:12:04] Well, there's language, of course, in the gospel according to Hebrews, which makes the matter stark and plain.

Why there is fear of death for the unsaved, no fear of death for the saved. Chapter six speaks of the resurrection of the dead. Death is not the end of being, the end of existence.

And again, what produces fear in the unbeliever but confidence in the believer, in chapter nine, listen to this stark statement, it is appointed unto men, women, boys, girls, [00:13:04] it's appointed unto men once to die and after death, the judgment. Death is inevitable, death is irrevocable, but it's not the end, it's followed by the judgment.

The only people who need have no fear of the judgment is those who trusted Christ as Savior. And why? Well, we've got the language here in verse nine, Christ has tasted death for every man. If the power of death is Satan's, if the fear of death is the portion of the unbeliever, the tasting of death was Christ's.

[00:14:03] What does it mean?

Not easy to explain or expound, taste, sample, experience, tasting, sampling, experiencing is something you do voluntarily, willingly, not because you have to, but because you're willing to.

The Lord Jesus Christ didn't need to die, death is the portion of sinners, the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Christ, sinless, perfect, holy, he willingly tasted death.

He went into it of his own accord that you and I might have no fear of death. [00:15:05] What wonderful

love.

He didn't need to die for himself, he didn't need to experience all the shame and the horror of the death of Calvary.

But he sampled it, he went into it that you and I might never have to taste it.

What a grand exception Enoch was.

A picture, if the Lord spares us and you're here, we'll come to some other words like this, example, figure, shadow, but here we have in Enoch a picture, an illustration of [00:16:11] the difference between trusting Christ and being an unbeliever. Now you may well have heard, if so I'll tell you again. If you haven't heard it, listen to this. What do you make of this statement? A man born once will die twice.

A man born twice may never die. That's a bit of a conundrum, isn't it? But it's right according to scripture, a person who has only been born once and experienced natural birth into this world, into this life, will die because he's a sinner. [00:17:02] And then the final death, banishment, separation from God, eternal torment, away from God.

Not in company with the people you've enjoyed life with, but as men would say, in solitary isolation.

The second death, as scripture speaks of it. But like Enoch, who walked with God and was not, for God took him, someone who's not only had a natural birth, but a spiritual birth, new birth, or he may never die. Jesus is coming.

[00:18:01] We've sung it, lovely words.

Jesus is coming.

And those who've trusted Christ as saviour can say, as we sang in the hymn, coming for me, for me.

Not because I deserve it, but because he wants me to be with himself. The Christian hope is not to go to be with Christ when I die.

If the Lord chooses that my life of responsibility on earth comes to an end before he comes again, so be it. But that's not the Christian hope. The Christian hope is to be alive and remain, waiting and watching for Jesus who's coming [00:19:02] for me, for me.

No fear of death for the one who's waiting to be translated, caught up, raptured, transferred from this dark, sinful world to the presence of Christ in the glory of God. No wonder there's no fear of death. Well, there is another reference in verse 14. Jesus took part in flesh and blood, that through death.

Not now the power of death, not now the fear of death, not now tasting death for us, but the medium of death. Or chapter two is all about the reason why it was necessary for Jesus to come into this [00:20:07] world in incarnation, God manifested in flesh and to become a man. Chapter one says, in his glorious person he's God and he is by whom the worlds were made. Chapter two says, for me, for you, he came into the world, he became a man, because if he hadn't become a man, he couldn't have passed through the medium of death. This is why chapter two says, it wouldn't have been any

use at all, Jesus becoming an angel, entering into the condition of an angel, no, if man were to be saved, if mankind is to be relieved of the fear of death, the Lord Jesus had to enter into a condition where [00:21:08] it was possible for him to die. Not for himself, not because he was a sinner, but on behalf of sinners, that through death, the medium of death, or the Lord Jesus really did die.

Think about it, what it meant to him, coming into the world a real baby.

Not in adult mind, in a little baby body, the marvel of the incarnation is, he became a real baby, a real toddler, a real boy, a real teenager, a real man.

[00:22:10] What marvelous grace that the Lord Jesus was willing to go through those stages, those phases, entering into full adult manhood, all with this object in mind that he would really die.

He was a real man and he really died.

Oh, how much truth in a few little verses, few little words.

Obedient, the Bible says, unto death, and that the death of the cross, yes, the medium of death, he really died.

[00:23:02] He didn't go into a trance, as some people would like to think, it wasn't a conjuring trick, he really suffered, he really died, and I'm sure that's why, in verse 9 here, it says, the suffering of death.

He became a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death.

How can this be, that he became lower than the angels? Peculiar phrase, isn't it?

Not personally, he's God.

[00:24:04] Not morally, he's pure and holy.

In the order of beings, in the hierarchy of beings, angels are higher in the scale of being than men.

If the Lord Jesus had become an angel, he could have acted on behalf of angels. He didn't do that.

Because God so loved the world and the people in the world, mankind, Jesus became a man, that he might die the death due to men because men have sinned. And he had to go through not only the medium of death, through death, but the suffering [00:25:04] of death, and all that entailed wasn't just that he died about half way through the normal lifespan. He did that. The Bible said he would, hundreds of years beforehand, said he'd be cut off in the midst of his days.

And in his mid-thirties, half the normal allotted span of 70 years, Jesus died. Not due to natural causes, but because he bore the burden of sin. The terrible weight of sin in all its aggregate, in all its horrible totality, Jesus bore all that in itself is marvellous, isn't it? Have you considered, do you believe that the suffering of death was accepted by God as [00:26:08] sufficient to cover every sin that's ever been committed by everybody that's ever lived?

Some people say that the number of people alive on earth at the present time equals in total

everybody that's ever lived and died upon the earth. Well, population is mushrooming. And if at the present time there are about 3,000 million souls, if that was right, it would mean that certainly at least 6,000 million people have lived and died on the face of the earth.

[00:27:03] All sinners, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, who lived and died upon earth, there is sufficient virtue in the death of Jesus to cover every sin and every kind of sin that's ever been committed. Do you believe that? It's what the Bible says.

He is the bearer away of the sin of the world. But let's go to the other extreme.

It's possible, and it's right, for believers in the gospel, those who've trusted Christ, it's possible for me as a believer to say, of Jesus, who his own self, bear my sins in [00:28:06] his own body on the tree.

Oh, it's not just a big mass and the individual details forgotten. Every sin is known to God.

Every sin made it a necessity to God that Jesus should suffer the death of the cross. But those who trust him are brought into the good of the suffering of death. The Bible says the righteousness of God is unto all. It's available to all.

Everyone whosoever is willing to come into the blessing is catered for. But all the writer says, while it's unto all, it's upon, it rests upon, it's enjoyed by [00:29:02] those who believe.

Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins?

Marvelous blessing that God makes available. As the Lord gives you opportunity, read through the epistle to the Hebrews. If you can, come through the week, hear about some of the better things that are available because Jesus suffered unto death and that the death of the cross. A quote of that verse, it is appointed unto men once to die and after death, the judgment.

[00:30:08] For the unbeliever, opportunity gone of trusting Christ when death comes in.

There's no indication that those who've rejected Christ all their life will have a sudden change of heart on their deathbed. Yes, there are deathbed conversions, thank God for that. But the norm is that people die as they've lived and if they've lived without Christ, they will die without Christ and after death, the judgment.

Judgment is sure for the unbeliever.

Justice is sure for the unbeliever. Blessing is sure for the believer. [00:31:02] Why? Because Christ died and rose again. All the blessing, all the judgment is sure and certain, God says so, and it's been established in the death and resurrection of Christ. Get pictures of that too and statements in the Bible that blessing and justice alike are sure because Christ died and rose again.

People go on, no thought of God, not only the drunkard or the child abuser or the murderer.

People who outwardly nice people nor thought of God before their eyes.

[00:32:07] Not so long ago, a famous sports commentator decided at 66 he would retire.

He was interviewed and he was asked, what lay ahead for him? How sad, no mention of God, no mention of the gospel.

He said something like this, there's a lot of good books I'd like to read, he didn't mention the Bible, I like a nice meal, I like good wine, I like good company, a few years in the garden and then coast down to the grave, gentle, steady, peaceful, unhurried.

[00:33:13] How sad that an apparently kind, careful, thoughtful, nice man could have no finer prospect ahead than coasting down to the grave.

Not in top gear, not in bottom gear, but just coasting down in neutral, in other words, the vehicle not under direct control.

Joseph, we read in chapter 11, was so composed in the face of death, we read, he gave commandment [00:34:08] concerning his bones, what a strange thing to write.

He wanted things done decently and in order and with his family around him, he said, now this is what I want you to do after I've gone, no fear of death, utterly composed. I've known believers like that, so do you, those of you who've trusted the Saviour. I remember one, Cecil Richardson, known to most of you.

The gospel being preached at heaven, dear Jack Walton, the preacher. [00:35:01] As always, tea at 80 Armstreet.

If I've got the details not quite right, I'll be adjusted afterwards. Whether it was tea or supper, the preacher was there, probably accompanied by his wife. George and Winnie Bell were there. Like Joseph, Cecil Richardson gave commandment concerning his bones. Whatever the subject, turned to funerals. Cecil in his forthright way says, now look, I've got no difficulty, he never had, everything was perfectly plain to him and he was fully assured in his faith. He said, it's no problem to me. He said, George, you will take the funeral in the hall and Jack, you will do it at the graveside. Told them the hymns, what he wanted to be done and fully assured, no fear of death in [00:36:05] his eyes.

No one was to know that later that night, whether it was over the supper table with the visitors still there or after they'd gone, I can't remember. He had a massive heart attack. He was gone to be with Christ before breakfast time the next morning. Of course, his widow was sad.

She sorrowed.

Not as others who have no hope, but it was a real sorrow being bereft of a partner. She went to be with Christ a couple of weeks ago, far, far better, no fear of death.

[00:37:01] Monday morning, I got a phone call from a nephew, just about nine o'clock, to tell me that a beloved brother, one described by a contemporary as a real Apollos, a mighty man eloquent in the scriptures, had gone to be with his Lord, or like Joseph, fully composed, he'd given commandment concerning his bones.

Death is real, but death is not the end. One more example. I've got my own Hebrews 11, I'm sure you all have, those of you who know the Lord. It was my joy and help to be at South Shields from 1958 to

1962, spiritually happy to sit [00:38:04] at the feet of Willie Barnes, quiet, gentle, well instructed, kind believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. While I was at Shields, Mrs. Barnes went to be with the Lord. She died as far as this life was concerned. We went to visit Willie, to attempt to support him in his grief. Now, he said to me, what seemed a very strange thing, oh think about it, those of you who know Christ, those of you who aren't saved, think about these words, gentle, spiritual man, he said this, would you like to see the body?

Now, when I got away, I thought, wasn't that strange? [00:39:05] He didn't say, would you like to see it? He said, would you like to see the body? What did he mean? He wasn't being morbid, spiritual man, he said, she's with Christ, which is far, far better.

The body is on earth, the body will be buried, the body will be raised, but she's gone. Oh, there's no fear of death for those who trust Christ, who died to save them.

Death concerns the body.

It is the body that is laid in the grave, it is the body that's left behind, the immaterial part of the person, spirit and soul, go to be with Christ, which is far, far better for [00:40:03] the believer.

War for the unbeliever, death is not extinction.

The immaterial component, spirit and soul, reserved, not for blessing, but for judgment. And as the body, even if the body decomposes as far as this life is concerned, God, who formed man in the first place, God has stated that every person who has sinned, and this is all, everyone will be raised and judged, and if they haven't trusted Christ as saviour, they will be cast into outer darkness the second day.

[00:41:12] Blessing and judgment, both certain, because Jesus died and rose again. We're going to sing our last hymn now. Again, it speaks of Christ suffering for sins.

Let us consider well, once again, whether we are still in fear of death, under Satan's power, because we haven't had our sins forgiven. Farewell the suffering of Christ unto death, even the death of the cross. Escape the judgment, enjoy the blessing, because Christ died and rose again.