

What Does the Bible Teach About Deathbed Confessions?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Matt. 25:1-13
- B. There are several crises in life that move people to consider their lives and the choices they have made.
 - 1. Graduation, marriage, birth of first child, children leaving home, retirement, parents becoming dependent, and facing impending death.
 - 2. We think about our past and contrast it with the present; we examine our present course to determine where it will lead in our future.
 - 3. It is better to complete our examination and set our course in the earlier crises of life - Ecc. 12:1
 - 4. At each stage of life, if we resolve each crisis the same way, we make it easier to do it the same way the next time, and harder to choose a better way for the next crisis; so, by the time one comes close to facing death, he is fully set in his past patterns of thought and behavior.
- C. Can one be saved in the twilight days of life?
 - 1. In Jesus' parable of the vineyard workers, salvation is available to all, no matter when they come to the cross - Matt. 20:1-16
 - 2. Fred Nail obeyed the Gospel in 1981 at 82; 3 months later he passed.
 - 3. I visited my uncle Burl Taylor in the hospital who had left the faith as a younger man. He was facing death, made his confession of unfaithfulness to the Lord, and was restored by prayer. Eleven days later, he passed away.
- D. Who decides?
 - 1. An aged man and woman come to you and say, "We lived our lives in sin with no regard for God or man. We have heard the Gospel, believe in God and His Son, we want to be saved."
 - a. How would you respond? How has their story moved you?
 - b. Do you believe they will be saved in spite of the lateness of their confession?
 - 2. We don't get to decide; we don't get to make a judgment; we don't have the authority to offer or withhold salvation.
 - a. We are messengers of the Gospel, not the arbiters of salvation.
 - 3. God decides!
- E. What is taught in scripture about those who plan for a last minute conversion?
 - 1. Those two mentioned earlier are the rare exception, not the rule
 - 2. Most who plan to wait until the eleventh hour die at 10:45.

I. WHEN IS OUR ELEVENTH HOUR?

- A. Most people assume they will live a long life, or that an untimely death will not happen to them.
- B. Why is this a foolish assumption?
- C. No one is promised a long life - Prov. 27:1
 - 1. Wealth and success are no assurance of longevity - Luke 12:15-21

- D. Wicked people engage in behaviors that often increase their misery and frequently hastens their deaths.
 - 1. Psalm 55:23; Prov. 9:11, 10:27, 21:16; Ecc. 7:17; Eph. 6:2-3
 - 2. The sexually promiscuous risk diseases - Prov. 6:32-33
- E. Lifetime sinners are lulled into complacency - Psalm 73:12-20
- F. The preservation of life is not in human hands.
 - 1. We do not know what our lives will end, or whether we will become a victim of an accident or disease.
 - 2. Or when the Lord will come in the Judgment.
 - a. That is the point of the parable of the ten virgins. The five foolish virgins thought they knew when the bridegroom would come - Matt. 25:1-13
 - 3. We cannot know when the Lord will return - Matt. 24:42-51
 - a. Note that the wicked slave is called a hypocrite, a person putting on an act. Planning to obey the Gospel later is living as a fraud.

II. HOW CAN A PROCRASTINATOR REPENT?

- A. God judges our hearts and actions, not our claims - Matt. 7:16-23
- B. True repentance is regretting the sins one committed, not regretting the fact that he will soon face the consequences of the sins he committed - 2Cor. 7:10
 - 1. How can one profess sorrow for what he purposes to do now and plans to renounce later?
- C. Repentance is changing one's attitude about sin and manifesting that change in his life - 2Cor. 7:11
 - 1. This plan creates an unresolvable inconsistency that must devolve into self-deceit. Either one is being dishonest about sin now, or he is planning to be dishonest about repentance later - Rom. 6:1-2
 - 2. The desire to change isn't there now and cannot be trusted to be there later - James 4:4-10
 - 3. Like smokers, drunkards, or porn addicts who claim they can quit anytime, but will not prove it by stopping today, and will do it some day; so, the one who spends a lifetime in sin will discover it is unlikely they will ever quit. The vast majority never do.

III. THE VALUE OF A GODLY LIFE

- A. Too many people have the foolishly uninformed belief that living a righteous life is miserable - Psalm 16:11
- B. God's instructions make life better.
 - 1. For our good - Deut. 10:12-13
 - 2. See good in life - Psalm 34:11-14
 - 3. Long, peaceful life - Prov. 3:1-2
 - 4. Profitable for all things in this life and for the life to come - 1Tim. 4:8
- C. God watches over His people - Psalms 37:25
 - 1. Sinners not only reap what they plant - Gal. 6:7-8
 - 2. They often reap more than they plant - Hosea 8:7

3. For example: a man who plans on being promiscuous with as many women as possible is in for a miserable life.
 - a. He will never have a stable relationship because he is constantly betraying trust.
 - b. He will never have a loving, stable home because good women don't want that kind of a man for a husband..
 - c. He may have kids, but he will see them as burdens and a drain on his income, and will likely have to bear with their contempt.

Conclusion:

- A. I have lost count of the number of deathbeds I have attended over the years.
 1. Of all of them, I have never heard any man or woman express regret that they didn't get drunk more often, that they didn't get stoned often enough, that they wished they had fornicated more often, that they didn't lie, or steal, or cheat enough, or that they wish they had missed more worship services.
- B. Heb. 11:24-27; Ecc. 11:9 - 12:1