

# A Death Sentence

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by Wayne Goff

*In January 2008, the well-known actor Patrick Swayze was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He died in September 2009, but wrote a book before his death, entitled *The Time of My Life*. The following is an excerpt from that book:*

"Fighting cancer has been the most challenging and eye-opening experience I've ever had, and it has sent me on an emotional journey deeper than anything I've felt before. Facing your own mortality is the quickest way possible to find out what you're made of ... It also leads you to confront life's hardest questions: Is there a heaven? Will I make it in? Has this life counted for something other than just my own narcissism? Have I lived a good life? Am I a good person? It's easy to dismiss these difficult questions when you have your whole life ahead of you. But when you're faced with your own mortality, they suddenly take on a whole new meaning." (p. 3).

## Appointment With Death

*"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,"* Hebrews 9:27.

Death and judgment are two appointments every human being will make. One of the toughest jobs as a gospel preacher is to persuade people to face "life's hardest questions" before they die. Most of us would rather not deal with our own mortality until we absolutely have to. But the truth is that we cannot afford to take the risk of dying in such a way that you have time to prepare. If you die suddenly, unexpectedly, then you have no time to prepare. Then you have eternal judgment to face with its eternal consequences. The Bible is God's message to you about facing eternity. It's up to you to read it and be warned.

## "What Must I Do?"

The book of Acts contains numerous incidents of people who lived over two thousand years ago who were willing to face the question: "**What must I do to be saved?**" (Acts 16:30; see also Acts 2:38; 9:6; 11:13-14; etc.).

First, one must be willing to admit the fact that you are **lost**. Lost? Yes, lost in sin, separated from God and a right relationship with Him. That's what these people were facing, and that's what people have always faced before God. Romans 3:23 says that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" Sin separates you from God (Isaiah 59:1-2), and the Gospel found in the New Testament is God's message of *salvation* and *redemption* for you.

Once you recognize your **lost condition**, then the Gospel ("Good News") takes on great significance. God so loved the world that He gave up Jesus, His Son, to die on the cross for **your** sins, John 3:16! You must **believe** on Jesus in order to be saved, John 8:24. You must believe that He is the Son of God, Acts 8:37. You must be willing to **trust** and **obey** Jesus: "*And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*" Hebrews 5:9. The people in the book of Acts had come to this point in their lives, and so they asked the question, "**What must I do to be saved?**"

The answer to the question depends upon where you are in your relationship to God. If you do not yet believe in Jesus as the Son of God, then the answer is "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved...**" (Acts 16:31). If you already believe in Jesus, then the answer is "**Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,...**" (Acts 2:38). If you have done these things, then you **are** a child of God, forgiven of your past sins, and ready to begin a new relationship with God (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:26-27).

That new relationship with God is called a "**walk**" with God, Romans 6:4; 1 John 1:7. It is a new way of living. You have committed the steps of your life to Jesus Christ and you learn how to live your life in harmony with His instructions found in the New Testament. This continued walk of life done properly is described as being "**faithful**," Revelation 2:10. You are simply living a new life in harmony with the moral and religious principles taught in the New Testament.

## What Will You Do?

Sadly, most people in the world will live and die without Jesus Christ. They will ignore their appointment with death and meet God in judgment unprepared. They will then have answered for them "life's hardest questions." Is there a heaven? Will you make it in? Are you good enough? Dear reader, you must prepare **now!**