

Intro.

- A. Chapman, Lovelady, Monzera, Runions, Strickland, Willett
1. Sound like roll call at school (or in the army)?
 2. These = friends who have spoken their last words in this life (died before age 42!!!)
- B. Some do not like to think about sickness & death.
1. Because dying is inevitable, we need to give it our most serious contemplation!
 2. Many say our subject is morbid ---- I say it is ***Facing reality!***
- C. 100's of ways that men die:
1. James, son of Zebedee & bro. of Jn. Died ---- ***sword***
 2. Absalon, David's rebellious son, -----***pierced by darts***
 3. Achan, who disobeyed God at Jericho -----***stoned***
 4. God ***burned up*** Nadab & Abihou with fire from heaven for their false worship
 5. Eli, the H. P., fell & ***broke his neck***
 6. Haaman was ***hung on the gallows he had built***
 7. Egyptians were ***drown***; Judas committed ***suicide***
- D. Think about how people die today:
1. Heart disease = #1 killer
 2. Cancer = #2 killer
 3. Stroke = 3rd leading cause of death
 4. 4th leading cause of death = accidents
 5. Drunk drivers will kill 600 of us this week!
 6. 20,000+ are murdered each year **Death is real**

Discuss.**I. WHAT IS DEATH?**

- A. Misconceptions:
1. Not a *long last leap into the dark* (as atheists say)
 2. Nor *an annihilation* & the end of any existence (as Sadducees said)
 - a. God told Moses, *I am the God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob*, **Mt. 22:23-28/29-32**
 - b. To the Pharsiees Jesus said, *For all live unto him*, **Lk. 20:38**
 3. Death is not described correctly by the J. W.'s when they speak of *soul sleep*
- B. The Bible explains death....
1. As, primarily, a ***consequence of sin***, **Rom. 5:12 (1 Cor. 15:21-22)** Rockefeller)
 2. A ***power***, overcome by & in Christ, yet certainly stronger than prestige or position (e.g. Edison, Lincoln **1 Cor. 15:21, 24-26, 55-57**)
 3. A ***mystery***, **1 Cor. 15:51** (we don't know all the facts about Life or about Death!) [**Job 38:17ff**]
 4. A ***blessing***, (**Psa. 116:15 & Rev. 14:13**)
 - a. For a baby bird to hatch, the egg that nurtured it in it's early development must be broken
 - b. Similarly, man's soul will not be *released* from his body until the fleshly body is *broken*.
 5. A ***tragedy*** for those, who like the *rich man*, are unprepared (**Lk. 16:23-25, torment**) c. also **Mt. 26:24**
 6. A ***certainty***, **Ecc. 9:5**

II. COPING WITH DEATH

- A. Little comfort can be found for one dying who is outside of Christ (non-Christian or unfaithful)
1. There is no pleasant way to face death without Christ & without hope *except for the relief of not witnessing the struggle of physical agony.*
 2. Time lessens the heartache, & pleasant memories help to sustain us!
- B. Passing of a saint can be viewed much more positively (in spite of a degree of sorrow, **2 Sam. 12:23**).
1. The ***God of all comfort*** (**2 Cor. 1:3**) offers us very optimistic overtones:
 - a. Balaam lamented, *Let me die the death of the righteous*, **Num. 23:10**
 - b. In **Psa. 116:15** – *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.*
 - c. John wrote, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord...that they may rest f/ their labors, & their work will follow them.*
 2. Hard to be objective, but haven't lost something/one if know where it is. **1 Sam. 20:18**

- C. Normal stages we go thru when we are grieving the death of a loved one
1. **Disbelief** / shock (*automatic protection device*)
 - a. The many details requiring our immediate attention can be a blessing.
 - b. As when disciples told Jesus re: John the Baptizer (c. **Mt. 14:12**), look to God for guidance.
 - c. Allow friends to comfort & console, **Rom. 12:15** (*rejoice...weep*)
 2. **Guilt** = (*Why didn't I do more? say more?*)
 3. **Hostility** ----- In anger, may lash out or try to blame someone. [***Better to forgive, instead]
 4. **Normalcy** -- Stay busy & active, & delay major decisions. (**Hope for tomorrow returns**)
- D. Most can be objective about death until it comes close to their immediate family (or self).
1. Usually deny the pending fact.
 2. Anger – *Why me???*
 3. Bargaining with God --- Eventually, we accept the facts of the verdict.
 4. Depression (due to literal, physical pain, or finances; guilt about leaving)
 5. Acceptance---for the Christian, *Victory over death!* (diff. in resignation & defeat, hopeless)
- E. After the verdict, what then?
1. Increased awareness of small things.
 2. There is an advantage for the terminally ill: specific preparation. (c. **Jn. 7:33**)
 3. Natural to be apprehensive re: the unknown. (**Josh. 3:4; Heb. 11:8**)
 4. **Lk. 22:44** – Like Christ, **courage** \geq absence of fear, but *continuing in spite of anxieties*.
 5. Our *walk thru the valley of the shadow of death* will not be a blissful skip!

III. IS DEATH AN INDITEMENT OF GOD?

- A. Our well-meaning friends are much like Job's.
1. If a man loses his wife, a child, etc., they tell us: *It was the will of God!!!*
 2. The laws of our land describe certain tragedies as "*acts of God.*"
 3. Few yrs. ago a mine disaster killed 119 men, & God was indited.
- B. Easy to blame God!
1. Should consider our own neglect (or someone else's).
 2. Sometimes equipment failure is the culprit.
 3. Many times, there is no one or nothing to blame. Things just happen!
- C. Ray Beggs wrote: *I Have Cancer* & he makes some astute observations:
1. Faith doesn't free us f/ pain; it can help us rise above it, **Rom. 8:38-39**
 2. Although God doesn't **inflict** pain, He certainly **allows** it on occasion.
 - a. may warm by a fire, but can also become badly burned
 - b. need water for our existence, but may drown
 - c. bacteria is essential for our health (digestion process), but can also kill
 - d. Need to realize: We don't always understand trials, but good can come of them, **Js. 1:12**
 - e. **Heb. 12:6, 11** (**Rom. 5:3-5** -- may help us to understand eventually, *Why me?*)

Concl.

- A. Doesn't really matter **how long** we live, but **HOW** we live. (Methusaleh)
1. One preacher urging folks to live in view of the hereafter, asked all who wanted heaven to stand.
 2. Little boy down front was asked why he stayed seated. – *Thought you were getting a load tonight.*
- B. Usually envision death: Elderly person lying between two clean sheets, surrounded by friends, falling asle
1. Reality, only 1/2 those conceived reach adulthood, & many die in their prime.
 2. Ananias & Sapphira died while lying to God; Stephen died while praying.
- C. What will you & I be doing when death comes to our house? → 1. Not sure?!
2. Make these the laws you live by: 1) *Don't engage in anything you would not be willing to do at the moment of your death!!!*
2) *Stay prepared! (faithful to God as His child)*
- D. If I live to be 150, I'll never understand how people can know death is real, & still not prepare.
1. We are dying at a rate of 2 @ second, 120 people each minute, 7200 @ hr., 170,000 every day.
 2. **2 Cor. 6:2** --- **Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**

