

DEAD MAN WALKING
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Its funny how precious life becomes when we realize we are about to die. What would we be willing to do or change in our lives if we realized we were dying? Death is an inescapable fact; it is the price tag coming due all of us as a result of sin. **Romans 6:23** assures us of this, as does **Hebrews 9:27**. While the consequences of sin are clear, never make the mistake of assuming that death is a penalty God enjoys meeting out. **Ezekiel 18:32** speaks of God's desire for our repentance, rather than our deaths. Repentance is God's way of allowing us to turn and live. The good news is that, until we die, we have a chance every day to turn away from sin.

There are actually two ways to sin mentioned in scripture. There are sins of commission, done by disobedience to the commandments of God or those he appoints. **James 4:17** explicitly defines another type of sin, the sin of omission. These we commit when we know to do good, but do not do it. This was Cain's first sin, immediately followed by murder. In **Genesis 4:6-7**, Cain had an opportunity to correct his error, and we are clearly told he knew the right thing to do. He just chose to let sin rule over him instead, ultimately for the rest of his life. Some sins, like those of Abimelech who desired Sarah, are committed in ignorance, but the consequences are nonetheless deadly. We read in **Genesis 20:3** that God came to this king in a dream, telling him, "Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife." Abimelech had been condemned to die by his actions. It was just a matter of time till the sentence was carried out. We all bear an uncanny resemblance to this king.

Like Abimelech, we sometimes feel hopeless or desperate facing our own sentence of death. When a condemned man on death row was transferred from one place to another, guards used to call, "Dead man walking!" This signified; the one coming was sentenced to die, there was no longer any hope for them, to be extremely watchful of them and their actions, because they had nothing left to lose. I have been there before. I have been cut off from God's presence without any assurance I would ever have a chance to get right with Him. You have been there too. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:1-3**. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

There is no question of the sentence we are living under. **Romans 3:23** leaves none guiltless. In the same chapter, "there is none righteous, no, not one." Indeed, Solomon in **Proverbs 14:12** warns us we can believe we are living right, according to our own standards, and still reap death as a reward. It is our inheritance, given us by Adam, according to Paul in **Romans 5:12**. Luckily, the passing of the sentence did not eliminate the chance of a pardon. There is a principle throughout scripture of natural life exchanged for spiritual life. In our case, the life paid was not ours.

We need to understand that in God's eyes, there are different degrees and different types of death. There is a difference between being dead and being asleep. The best way to avoid our death sentence being permanent is to get into the body of the One who already paid the penalty for us. Being a part of the body of Christ guarantees resurrection from our natural deaths in **Ephesians 2:4-6** How long can we be dead and God still raise us up when He returns? When the events occurred in **John 11:43**, Lazarus was already decomposing. If we stop breathing with His life in us, we will hear when God calls and obey His call, no matter how long we have been buried. He brought dry bones back to life in **Ezekiel 37:3**. Apparently, His power to grant life is limitless and He desires to do the same. He told us in **John 10:10** that He came, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Note that Lazarus could always have chosen to stay in the tomb. We have the same choice.

While we are still breathing, there is an opportunity to decide whether we will live again. **Ecclesiastes 11:3** says it is only when the tree falls that the direction it will lie forever is determined. Jesus said in **John 5:39-40** that all scripture pointed toward Him alone as the source of eternal life. Knowing this, we are still reluctant to immerse our life and our will in His. Jesus said clearly in **John 14:6** that there was no other alternative available. There is no other way to cheat death. Only one route was provided. The ticket has

already been prepaid, waiting for us to accept it and use it. **Romans 5:18** tells us, “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” God gave His own life up to make it possible for us to surrender our own to Him. In the process, we can save it, no matter how wicked we may have been, **Ezekiel** told us in the **eighteenth chapter** of his book, “If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.”

The scriptures are clear as to God’s will and pleasure regarding our chance to escape death. The escape route is clearly laid out by Paul, who said in **Romans 6:4**, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

We may not be able to do much about being dead men walking. But that becomes irrelevant when we lie down to sleep, knowing that soon, we will also be dead men rising.