The Watchman's Warning

I want to talk about one thing everyone who lives any length of time on earth thinks about. That is the reality of death, and the fact that "one out of every one die." Dying is not an aberration. Everyone will die, whether by accident, disease, a criminal act, war or of 'natural causes' that is our bodies wearing out from a long life. Whether now or later it's our payment for Adam's sin. Nothing terrifies people more than the fear of death. (especially the unsaved – except those who have false assumptions of what lies ahead) Many wait until they are sick, elderly and/or death is imminent before they seriously contemplate what follows death.

However what you believe about your life, and how and why you're here, will determine where you will spend eternity – even if you don't believe in eternity. Those who know and understand the gospel message and have accepted it by faith know eternity, with heaven as their home, is their destiny. Just because you don't believe in hell doesn't mean you won't spend eternity there. Even though we don't understand the law of gravity or how electricity works, we don't jump off three story buildings or put our fingers electrical boxes grabbing wires. We respect the power and know the danger because through our lives we have seen and heard about the results of what may happen if we do not. There has never been anyone who has had a loved one (or anyone else) come back after they have died and prove to us without question what lies ahead. Whether heaven, hell, oblivion, annihilation or whatever, many of us fear the worst and hope for the best. Many choose the "ignorance is bliss!" attitude. That is "if I don't see it it's not there" or "if I don't believe it - it's not true." I'm sure we all have known someone like that. Note: There is no biblical reference to Purgatory, Reincarnation, Soul sleep, or immediate personal annihilation, after death. Those who attempt to use the Bible for verification of their views misinterpret the verses they use.

However there is One who has come back from and conquered death. After conquering death, speaking of His resurrection and our eternal life, in *John 14:19* Jesus said ***"Because I live you shall live also."*** Jesus was speaking to His disciples, those who by faith believed all they had seen and heard.

Since God created Adam and Eve, He has always told man what He expected of them. From Noah, Abraham, Moses, King David and all His prophets He always made it known that man was to strive to be good and do the right thing and God would bless them and that evil and wrongdoing would bring His judgment and wrath on them. So when He gave the prophet Ezekiel the following warnings, mankind knew the difference between right and wrong. Many books of the Old Testament had been written and read to the people and since the completion of the Bible God has spoken His warnings and it is up to us who have read and understand His warnings to pass them on.

God told Ezekiel *"Son of man, I've made you a watchman for the family of Israel (*and the people of God*). Whenever you hear Me say something, warn them for Me. If I say to the wicked, 'You are going to die,' (*and be subject to My wrath and eternal punishment in hell separated from Me*) and you don't sound the alarm warning them that it's a matter of life or death, they will die and it will be your fault. I'll hold you responsible. But if you warn the wicked and they keep right on sinning anyway, they'll most certainly die for their sin, but you won't die. You'll have saved your life.*

*"And if the righteous (*who once followed God*) turn back from living righteously and take up with evil, when I step in and put them in a hard place, they'll die. If you haven't warned them, they'll die because of their sins, and none of the right things they've done will count for anything—and I'll hold you responsible. But if you warn these righteous people not to sin and they listen to you, they'll live because they took the warning—and again, you'll have saved your life." Ezekiel 3:17-21*

*"You, son of man, are the watchman. I've made you a watchman for Israel (*and the people of God*) The minute you hear a message from Me, warn them. If I say to the wicked, 'Wicked man, wicked woman, you're on the fast track to death!' and you don't speak up and warn the wicked to change their ways, the wicked will die unwarned in their sins and I'll hold you responsible for their bloodshed. But if you warn the wicked to change their ways and they don't do it, they'll die in their sins well-warned and at least you will have saved your own life. Ezekiel 33:7-9*

The Apostle Paul, speaking in *Acts 26:13-18* telling the story of his conversion said, *"About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell down, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is useless for you to fight against My will.' "'Who are you, lord?' I asked. "And the Lord replied, 'I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting. Now get to your feet! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as My servant and witness. Tell people that you have seen Me, and tell them what I will show you in the future. And I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles.* ***Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in Me.'*** *Proverbs 1:7 says The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction*.

What is **Sin?**: All-inclusive missing of the mark (falling short) of God's holy standard in thoughts, words or deeds against God or our fellow man. *Romans 3:2* states *"for all have sinned and fall short of God's glorious standard." Romans 3:10* states *"There is none righteous, no not one."* And in *Isaiah 64:6 "But we are all as an unclean thing, and our righteousness are as filthy rags."* We are not sinners because we sin, we sin because we are sinners.

And as it says in *Romans 6:23 – "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ* our *Lord."*

Why do we need a Savior? Why do you need to know who Jesus is and what He has done?

It says in the *Book of Hebrews 9:27 "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment…"* (an inescapable confrontation with God). And in *Revelations 20:13"The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done."* But understand, when we accept the gospel, meaning we believe Jesus died on the cross ***"in our place"*** *and paid the price of death for our sins,* all of our sins past, present and future have been forgiven.

John 3:16 states, ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that <u>whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life</u>."*** Verse 17 continues "***For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, <u>but whoever does not believe stands condemned already</u> because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."*** In *Luke 11:23* Jesus says *"He who is not with Me is against Me…"*

God also says in *Isaiah 1:18 "Come now; let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."* And in *Psalm 103:12 "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Romans 3:22-24* says *"Now God says He will accept and acquit us - declare us 'not guilty' - <u>if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins</u>. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, <u>no matter who we are or what we have been like</u>. Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious ideal; yet now God declares us 'not guilty' of offending Him, <u>if we trust in Jesus Christ, who in His kindness freely takes away our sins</u>. For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's anger against us. He used Christ's blood and our faith as the means of saving us from His wrath."*

There is a saying, "Born once, die twice. Born twice, die once." Meaning, without accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, a person will die a physical death, and then according to *Rev. 20:11-15* at The Great White Throne Judgment, the second death - eternity in Hell. A believer, born physically, then "born again" spiritually, will die only once, physically, and then be with the Lord in Heaven eternally. If you do not know whether you have been "converted," " saved," "delivered" or " born again," then you have not.

Many people say they believe in heaven. But where does the concept of heaven come from? It comes from the Bible. What many people overlook, ***and ignorance is not bliss,*** is that entrance to heaven has a specific requirement; that is - accepting the Gospel message. After your death - no one can pray you into heaven or pray for forgiveness on your behalf. You cannot get into heaven because the rest of your family were or are dedicated Christians. You cannot plead for leniency, or make excuses. God does not grade on a curve as many of us were familiar with in school. ***The fact that we believe we are and have been good moral people and better than many others <u>is not</u> what decides whether or not we will be welcomed into heaven.***

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. Matthew 7:13

Hell is the place of torment for the lost (unsaved). Because everyone has sinned no one deserves to live with the Holy and righteous Heavenly Father. *Romans 3:10; 3:23* But God is a loving Father and He offers salvation from eternal spiritual death to all, and for those that reject the offer, God's justice will be executed and the wage of sin will be paid in Hell. Everyone has only one life in which to determine their destiny. Heaven or hell is determined by whether a person believes (puts their trust) in Christ alone to save them. Hell is an eternal, irreversible and conscious choice one makes.

Hell was designed originally for Satan and his demons. *"And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:10*

Matthew 10:28 - And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 13:50 - And He shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25:46 - And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Luke 16:24 And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-9 When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might…

2 Pet. 2:17 "These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them."

Revelation 14:10,11 tells us the final, eternal destiny of the sinner: "*He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone...the smoke of their torment ascended up forever and ever: and they have no rest day or night.*"

Revelation 20:15 - And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

The Bible refers to the fate of the unsaved with such fearful words as the following:

- "Shame and everlasting contempt." *Daniel 12:2*

- "Everlasting punishment" *Matthew 25:46*

- "Weeping and gnashing of teeth" *Matthew 24:51*

- "Fire unquenchable*" Luke 3:17*

- "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" *Romans 2:8,9*

- "Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" 2 *Thessalonians 1:9*

- "Eternal fire...the blackness of darkness forever" *Jude 7,13*

However God spoke through the prophet *Ezekiel 18:32 "For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!"*

No one is beyond God's merciful redemption except the one who continues to reject God's Gospel message and continue down the broad road to destruction, not realizing their eternal destiny, separated from His light and love, exiled to darkness and despair forever, the consequences of their inherited sinful nature without the forgiveness of God, left to travel through this life on their own.

Romans 2:5 states *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed.*

Hell: A decision of choice because of pride and arrogance. Heaven by the grace of God is a free gift!

There is no entrance into heaven without the one and only proper qualification. It will be your answer to God's question *"What did you do with the information you had about My son Jesus?"* However explained, *the only acceptable answer will be some form of the following, "I accepted Jesus as my Savior after hearing and believing the gospel message - which is,* ***God sent Jesus to this earth to make God known to man and for the purpose of dying, in my place, for my sins, that is - my redemption. I believe by faith that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, and God as the 2nd Person of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), who came to this world in human flesh, the only sinless man, who died on the cross, shedding His blood for our sins and was resurrected from the dead to affirm who He was and to give us hope.*** *It is my responsibility to acknowledge and confess my sins and to repent, turning away from my sins and to ask for forgiveness. Salvation is wholly of God by grace, (unmerited, undeserved favor) on the basis of our* ***trust*** *in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood on the cross, and* ***not*** *on the basis of anything we can do. (John 1:12; Eph. 1:4-7, 2:8-10; 1 Pet. 1:18-21)* ***More importantly, understanding that it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that shows He conquered death and gives us the assurance that all He said is true. The redemption of man being accomplished by His death on the cross and three days later, the greatest event to ever take place on earth, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*** Yes, the Resurrection. It is the reason we celebrate Easter and do so in the springtime. It is the beginning of new life. The beginning of our new life, (no matter how old we may be), when we acknowledge that He died in our place for our sins. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the single most important event in the history of our earth.

Almost everyone thinks they are a good person... But the question you should be asking is, "Am I good *enough* to go to Heaven?" How would you know? The way to find out is to ask yourself if you have obeyed the Ten Commandments. Most people say, *"Well, I've broken one or two, but nothing too serious, like murder, etc."* ***So as we go through them think back through your life and how you have done***. Are you guilty or innocent? Remember, breaking any ***one*** makes you a sinner.

1) "You shall have no other gods before *(or besides)* ***Me."*** Have you always put God first in your life?
2) "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord

your God, am a jealous God.*"** Have you created another god in your own mind (other than the God of the Bible) that you're more comfortable with. You may call it your "personal belief," but God calls it idolatry. ***3) "Thou shall not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name." Have you ever used God's name as a curse word? If you have, you've taken the holy name of God - who gave you your life, your family, and everything precious to you - and used it as a filthy, four-letter word. If you have used God's holy name in that manner, you are a blasphemer and the Bible says *"God will not hold him guiltless who takes the name of the Lord in vain."* ***4) "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God… For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."*** (God did not need to rest, He was setting an example for us) God commands that we set aside one day in seven. Have you ever been guilty of breaking this Commandment? ***5) "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."*** Have you always honored your parents in a way that's pleasing in the sight of God? Ask Him to remind you of the sins of your youth. You may have forgotten them, but God hasn't. ***6) "You shall not murder."*** Jesus warned in *Matthew 5:2 "Whoever is angry with his brother without cause is in danger of judgment."* and the Bible says, *in 1 John 3:15 "He who hates his brother is a murderer."* God sees hatred in the heart to be as wicked as murder. We can violate His Law by attitude and intent. ***7) "You shall not commit adultery"*** in *Matthew 5:28* Jesus warned, *"You have heard... 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* Have you ever looked at another person with lust? ***8) "You shall not steal."*** Have you ever stolen anything (even if it was something small?) The value of the thing stolen doesn't matter; petty theft is still theft. ***9) "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."*** Have you ever told a lie? Then you are a liar. How many murders do you have to commit to be a murderer? Just one. If you have told even one lie, that makes you a liar. ***10) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*** This means we should never desire anything that belongs to another person.

When the Ten Commandments (The Law) were given, it was never expected that man would be able to keep them in order to become righteous but to make man see that it was impossible to keep the commandments and needed a Savior. ***Who of us can say we are not guilty of breaking the Ten Commandments?*** This is what the Bible means when it says, "*All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.*" *(Romans 3:23)* Can you see your predicament? You are guilty of sinning against God Himself, and, because you have a conscience, (con-with, science-knowledge) you have sinned "with knowledge." Isn't it true that every time you lied, stole, or lusted, etc., you knew it was wrong? Does the fact that you have sinned against God scare you? *It should.* You have actually angered Him by your sin. The Bible says His wrath abides on you, that you are an *"enemy of God in your mind through wicked works Col. 1:21. Romans 5:8-9* states *"Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, He will certainly save us from God's condemnation."

Many have said that upon death, "all roads (religions / even no religion) lead to God." They all lead to a confrontation with God but only one way, through Jesus, leads to heaven. Whether now or later, the Bible, speaking of Jesus, says in *Philippians 2:9-11* that*, "… God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus <u>every</u> knee should bow, of those in heaven, and those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that <u>every</u> tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* In acknowledging the Gospel message and accepting it, you bow in reverence (whether physically or in your heart and spirit) and in return God promises you eternal life in heaven with Him for eternity. However, if you refuse to accept the Gospel, out of pride because you think you know better, you can no longer say you did not know. After you take your last breath you will find yourself in the presence of God but it will be too late for salvation. God has given us free choice and will not force Himself on you. If you want no part of God in this life, He will not force you to be with Him in heaven forever.

Everyone will exist eternally either in heaven or hell. The Bible tells us there will be a Resurrection of both the Saved and the Lost; *they that are saved* unto the resurrection of eternal life in heaven, and *they that are not* unto the resurrection of damnation. *John 5:26-29* says *"For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. <u>Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation</u>."* The "evil" and "wicked" person, as used throughout the Bible, are not just those who do despicable deeds but those who reject God and those who reject the Holy Spirit's leading to the truth of Jesus Christ as Savior, also known as the "unpardonable sin." Rejecting Jesus means no forgiveness of sins which means no salvation. A compassionate God lets man live in rejection of Him because He made a plan of reconciliation and waits for man to come to Him *willingly*, of his own free will.

I have heard and read and believe it's probably true, that the older a person becomes, the less likely he is to accept the gospel. If you have been blessed with a number of years on this earth, we pray you will beat the odds. <u>But time is of the essence</u>**.** *Hebrews 3:8,9* states, *So as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts…."* When someone hears the gospel message one of two things happen. It either works to save them or it hardens their heart. When you hear the gospel preached, through whoever is speaking, it is His (God's) message to you. <u>*It is never too late, but always better sooner than later and better later than not at all*</u>. The more times you hear of God's love and His offer of salvation and do not accept its message the harder your heart becomes and the less likely you are to accept the gospel.

In the parable of the soils in *(Matt.13)* Jesus explains the four different types of soils that the seed landed on. Jesus states that the "seed" is the "Word of the Kingdom" or "the Gospel." ***The soil is the heart of man.*** We need to remember, there is nothing wrong with this sower. There is nothing wrong with the seed.

The seed is being thrown by the same method. There is also nothing wrong with the soil either. *It was just the condition the soil was in.* Consider the condition of *your* heart as you read the following.

v.4) Some seed fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up
v.19) Explains - when anyone hears the message about the kingdom of God and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.
In verses 5,6 and 20,21 – This is a superficial, shallow heart. There is rockbed under the thin layer of soil and the roots can only go so far. The roots quickly take hold and grow fast and tall until the roots reach a limit of depth that provides no moisture and does not allow them to take hold and continue to grow. From that point they wither and die. This is where many are deceived about their salvation. They hear the gospel message, and receive it with great interest, joy, exhilaration and emotion. They believe – for a while - but in time they fall away, never developing their faith and trust in the Lord, allowing the cares of this world to sabotage their faith (vs. 7,22) however continuing to believe their initial acknowledgement of faith had sealed their salvation. *"These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us." 1 John 2:19* Jesus Himself tells us that only one out of four, through perseverance and endurance, are truly 'Born again.' I think this is a critical message that should be explained when the gospel message is presented. God has given you the opportunity to become part of His family through continued faith and trust in Him and His promises. ***v.23) But what was sown on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.*** (I believe meaning - bringing the Word to many others)

We are told we can be "saved" or "born again" up until we take our last breath. Did you know that the phrase "by the skin of my teeth" comes from the Bible in the book of Job? *Job 19:20 says I have been reduced to skin and bones and have escaped death by the skin of my teeth.* If you have not accepted Jesus as ***your*** Savior yet, you may not wake up tomorrow, make sure you make heaven your eternal home even if you do it "by the skin of your teeth."

Jesus said *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:37-40,44)* adds, *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me* ***, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.***

Let me leave you with the following*; (2 Cor. 6:2)* states, "***For God says 'Your cry came to Me at a favorable time, when the doors of welcome were wide open. I helped you on a day when salvation was being offered. Right now God is ready to welcome you. Today He is ready to save you. Behold, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.'"***