

Contrasting Picture of Life and Death

by Ian Paisley

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having Jesus Christ as our companion, friend, and guide in life's battles, and the need to have faith in Him in order to win the final battle of death.

Duration: 45:17

Scripture: Genesis 1:21, Psalm 23:2, Isaiah 1:7, Jeremiah 12:5, Matthew 6:33, 2 Timothy 4:3, Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Overcoming Adversity", "Eternal Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the challenges and struggles of life, comparing them to footmen in a race. He emphasizes that everyone will face disappointments, sickness, sorrow, and tragedy along their journey. However, the preacher also highlights the importance of relying on Jesus to overcome these obstacles and find peace. He concludes by reminding the audience that there will come a day when the footmen will be replaced by the cavalry charge of death, and everyone will face the final battle.

Transcript

I'd like your prayers. I go tomorrow to Norfolk, Virginia, to the Congress on Fundamentalism there. I'll be ministering in the book of Nehemiah.

I trust you'll read that book this week. It's a great book. It's a book about a preacher who built a wall.

Ezra built the church, a place where God was honored, the temple. But Nehemiah built the wall to keep the apostates out of the church. The first generation of fundamentalists built fundamentalist churches.

But we who are in the second generation of this conflict, we need to build the walls to keep the intruders and the compromisers and the traitors and those that would like us to go back to Babylonian apostasy need to keep them out. And you know as you read that, you'll discover that there was one gate built, but there was no locks put on it. And that was the gate where the enemy infiltrated, crept in.

Jude tells us there's people that creep in. Beware of the creepers, those that creep in unawares. We need to realize what we're about in these days.

I trust you'll read the book of Nehemiah and remember us in prayer. Then next Monday and Tuesday we'll be ministering in Phoenix, Arizona. And then we will be back to Atlanta, Georgia.

And then we will be home at the end of that week back to Porridge once again. So I trust you'll remember us in prayer. The British Parliament meets this week just for a day for prorogation.

And then Her Majesty the Queen will be opening the new Parliament. And I will be speaking on the Queen's speech a fortnight from the end of the incoming week. Do remember us as we raise the standard there for God and truth and righteousness.

It's exciting to be alive in these days. God's people should thank God that they're living in this age. The prophets longed to see this day, but they didn't see it.

We have a great privilege to be living in the climaxing of this age. And I trust that we'll thank God for the privilege and we'll buy up the opportunities that the Lord has given to us. We're going to read the Word of God tonight.

We're in the Old Testament. We're in the book of Jeremiah. He was a great prophet, this old man Jeremiah.

I like him because he was a jailbird like myself. I like the jailbirds of Scripture. Yes, it's a good thing to be in the old boys' club of the jail.

And Jeremiah was one of God's jailbirds. The great contender was Jeremiah. Do you want to read this book and study it? Do you want to read his lamentations too? He had tears.

And any contender for the fee of note needs the tears of compassion as he sees the world shot through with false doctrine and deceptions. And he hears the hireling prophets leading people astray. We're reading at the twelfth chapter of the book.

The twelfth chapter. Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee. Yet let me talk with thee of thy judgment.

Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Did you ever ask that question? Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? The way of the wicked is prospering today. You wonder where the judgments of God are. Old Jeremiah said, I know you're righteous, Lord.

I know your judgments are just. But tell me, O God, wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them. Yea, they have taken root.

They grow. Yea, they bring forth fruit. Thou art near in their mouth and far from their reach.

But thou, O Lord, knowest me. Thou hast seen me and tried mine heart toward thee. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter and prepare them for the day of slaughter.

We need to pray God's judgments down on lawlessness in our day. We need to lay hold upon the horns of the altar and ask God to make His judgments known. I believe God's making His judgments known in the great apostate heart of the Church of Rome at the present time for the death of the popes and the whole turmoil that has been turned up at the present time because of this.

God is working mightily today. He is working in apostate Protestantism too, casting down those that raise their voices so high against those that contend it for the faith and for the truth. God is at work.

It is a solemn day, a day of judgment. How long shall the land moor and the herbs of every field wither for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? The beasts are consumed and the birds because they said, He shall not see our last day. If thou hast to run with the footmen on day of weary day, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, for him thou trustest, they weary thee, then how wilt thou dwell in the swelling of Jordan? And God shall stamp with His own divine seed of approval and blessing this reading from the infallible book for His namesake.

Amen. We will stand to our feet for a word of prayer before the preaching. Father in Heaven, we thank Thee for a sense of Thy holy presence in this house already this day.

We thank Thee that Thou didst reveal to us in our morning session of worship the wonderful Son of Thy love, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. We pray that tonight, as the Word of God is proclaimed, the gospel of grace is preached, that Thou wouldst be pleased to lay liberally to our hands so that we might open our mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. Those without Christ, draw them effectively to Yourself.

Those that are cold in heart and backslidden in soul, restore them to the joy of God's salvation. Those this night that are Thine draw us closer and nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Make this a night of refreshing, a night of reviving, a night of blessing from the presence of the Lord.

To this end I take the promised Holy Ghost, the blessed power of Pentecost, to fill me to the uttermost. I take. Thank God He undertakes for me.

The people of God said, Amen. Amen. The twelfth chapter of Jeremiah, and the verse 5, If thou hast run with the footmen, and they are weary thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustest, they weary thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? If thou hast run with the footmen, and they are weary thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustest, they weary thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? In this text of Scripture, we have four contrasting pictures.

We have a picture of life. The first picture of life, contrast it with the first picture of death. And then we have a second picture of life, contrast it with a second picture of death.

The first picture of life. The great old prophet takes the canvas of divine inspiration and he paints upon it a picture of life. Life as a race.

If thou hast run, life is a race. But it is not only a race that he paints, but he paints the fact that life is an obstacle race. It is a race of many obstacles.

And he pictures life as a race against many foemen, against many enemies, against a great army of armed footmen. Life a race. Life an obstacle race.

Life a race contending with a great army of armed footmen. And when he has finished the painting, the runner is wearied. The runner is exhausted.

The runner is baffled and beaten and defeated. And then he takes his brush again and he paints a contrasting picture of death. And he paints death not contending with footmen, but contending with a cavalry charge.

How canst thou contend with horses if in the battle of life you could not face the footmen? You could not successfully strive against the armies that came against you. And there were only the armies of footmen. Tell me, how are you going to do in the last great battle, in the cavalry charge of death, if in life you're beaten and baffled and defeated and exhausted? How will you do in the final struggle with the pale horse and his rider? A contrasting picture.

And then he takes up his brush again and he paints a land of plenty. It's harvest time. The flowers are in full bloom.

The harvest is being gathered. All is prosperity. All is sunshine.

All is provision. All spells out the word plenty. The footmen are still there.

The race is still on. The soul is still weary. If in the land of peace, wherein thou trustest, they weary thee.

And then he paints the picture of Jordan in the time of harvest. For Jordan overflows her banks only in the time of harvest. And Jordan had an inner bank and the waters kept to that inner bank until the harvest came.

And then the waters overflowed until they reached the outer bank, the flood banks. But in the time in between, the wild animals of Palestine, the bear and the lion and others, made their lairs, made their homes, made their dens between the flood bank and the inner bank of the river. And so rapidly did the flood waters of Jordan rise that many a time in the harvest, one could hear the snarl of the lion.

One could hear the agony of a trapped bear. Too late to leave its home. Too late to leave its lair.

Too late to leave its den. And then on the outer bank, the waters rose and trapped in the waters, there was a howl of death. And the old prophet takes that and he turns it to a picture of man dying and he says, Tell me, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan? Contrasting pictures of life and of death.

I want to come back and deal with them this evening. Life is a race. Life is an obstacle race.

Life is a race. And it is a race against many foemen and many are the footmen that will meet down life's path and will have to struggle against. When I was a boy, I used to attend gospel services that my father conducted.

My father was a great gospel preacher. In my opinion, the greatest gospel preacher that ever lived. But my father used to talk many times about the battle of life, about the struggles and the trials and the heartaches that one met down life's path.

And I used to see the congregation respond and I used to see people assent to that. And people shed a silent tear that witnessed to the fact that they knew that life was such a struggle. But as a boy, I never understood that.

I thought quietly in my own heart there were only a bunch of old fogeys that didn't realize that life was a great thing. For to me, life was a wonder! The only thing I didn't like was school work. But I knew that one day that would end.

And I looked forward to that day as a sort of day when one entered into paradise. And all of anxiety over school work was over. What other labs have them? I remember once going to hear my dad preach a

series of evangelistic services in the town of Oma, in the province of Ulster.

And a very unique man asked my father to conduct those services. This man was a very extensive farmer in the community. His name was John Green.

He not only was a very extensive farmer, and my farming friends in Ulster tell me that farming is a full-time employment. And you couldn't get time to do anything else if you're a farmer. But this man was also the manager of the large dairy that was in that time where they turned up the milk and made the butter.

So he was able to be the manager of that and a farmer as well. He was something else. He was the postmaster of the town as well.

And he was something else. He was also the Baptist minister in the time. So he was a worker.

I do a few jobs myself, but this man really worked. But there was something else he could do. He could play a violin as I have never heard it played before or since.

And one night in a great gospel campaign that my father was preaching, just before he came to preach, he said, John, play something for us. And that big tall man got up and took the violin. He took the bow in his hand and he started to play an old hymn.

It seemed to me I was but a boy. I can hear it now as it comes to my mind in the wings of memory. And the violin spoke this old gospel song, There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus.

None else could heal all our soul's diseases. No, not one. No night so dark that His love can't cheer us.

No, not one. Jesus knows all about our struggles. He will guide till the day is done.

There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus. No, not one. As that man of God played that old gospel song, I saw a big man bow their heads and I saw the tears course down their rugged cheeks.

I saw women, folk, sobbing unapologetically what it was all about. But I wasn't very long walking down the path of life until I learned what it was about. That life is a race.

That life is an obstacle race. And I could spend time talking about the footman of disappointment, the footman of sickness, the footman of sorrow, the footman of tragedy that we all meet down the path of life. And if thou runnest with the footman and they weary thee, there's not an honest person in this meeting that at some time or other will have to confess, the footmen are too many for me.

I cannot fight life's battle or run life's race successfully. They weary me. And let me tell you tonight, you'll never be anything else but weary except the Lord Jesus goes down the race of life with you.

If you haven't got Him, no matter how well you start, no matter how courageous you're running, no matter how strong and valiant and courageous is your battle, down somewhere in life, some of these footmen will surely get the better of you. And you'll lie exhausted and wearied, another monument to the fact that man can't live his life without the grace of God and the company of the Son of God as companion, friend and guide. Have you got them tonight? Can you say, yes, life is a race? Life is an obstacle race.

Life is a battle. And all the footmen are pressing in upon me. And as I get older, I feel more and more those pressures.

But bless God, Jesus is with me. And He can take care of the toughest foe. He can smooth the roughest part of the road.

He can make straight the most crooked path. He can get me up the steepest road. He can negotiate the deepest river.

He is my friend, my Savior, my Lord and my God. Happy is the man or woman that can say that. What about you, my friend? You haven't got Him.

And you're feeling it now. The picture that the prophet painted so many centuries ago, it stares you in the face and you have to say it right. But let me tell you, there is a day coming when there will be no footmen to fight.

There is a day coming when the enemy will be on horseback. And when the footmen shall give place to the cavalry charge of death. And when you will be fighting the last great battle that we humans all have to fight.

I don't know, but the pale horse and his rider is riding this very night. One day that pale horse and its rider will have a summons for me or a summons for you. And the horseman will dismount outside your living quarters.

And the grim horseman will come and deliver the summons for you. And you will be ushered out of time into eternity. Down the corridor of death into the great, untracked, unknown eternity.

How shall thou contend with horses? Don't be dodging the collar. Don't be trying to get some way to get your mind off this great, eternal fact that one day you will have to contend with horses. It's up to the logic of it.

It's up to the truthfulness of the old prophet's reasoning. If thou hast run with the footmen and they are weary thee, how shall thou contend with horses? Let me tell you, you'll not contend at all. The cavalry charge will be irresistible and unresistable.

And you will fall another prey to the darkness of a lost eternity. I'm glad this Savior met that cavalry charge for me in the cross of Calvary. I'm glad that the devil rolled his battalions up the old hill crag of Calvary.

And there on the summit of that hill with standard raised stood the God-man, victory manual of the cross. And thank God He laid low every footman and every cavalryman of hell. He trod all His foes beneath His feet by being trodden down.

By His blood there is eternal life to all who put their faith and trust in Him. And when the summons come, the believer will not go it alone. The Lord Jesus will be with him.

How sweet and blessed is it to die in Jesus Christ. When I commenced my ministry in Belfast some 33 years ago almost, a young girl attended my preaching. She came to Christ.

She found the Savior. She was a very nervous lassie. She never was physically strong or robust.

And when she was age 17, she took a very severe cold. Complications arose. She took a disease of the lung.

And her medical man told her mother there was no hope. They called her Lila. I was with Lila just a few hours before she passed into eternity.

You know, when she was in good health, if you had slammed the door, she would have shuddered. She was a young girl with little courage. But you know, it was to fight the last great battle.

She was propped up in pillows in her bed. Her dad, her mother, and her only brother were there. She put out her free little hand and she took her daddy's hand and she said, Daddy, don't be weeping.

Don't go on so. I'm going to be with Jesus. My heart is full of happiness although my body is full of pain.

Daddy, wipe your tears. I'm going to the glory land. And she turned to her mother and she said, Mommy, I love you for you led me to Jesus.

And now I don't want you to be distraught or concerned for soon I'll be leaving you for the Jesus you taught me about. I was amazed at the bravery of that young girl and at her courage. And then she turned to her brother at the foot of the bed and she said, Stanley, I'm going to leave you but it might be forever for you're not saved.

Mommy, I'll meet. Daddy, I'll meet. But I don't know whether I'll ever meet you again.

That big fella just crumpled up and left the room. He couldn't stay there. She slipped away as easy as the boat slips anchor in a summer evening and sails out of that deathbed and I said, Let me die the death of the righteous.

Let my last end be. Many years afterwards I was preaching an evangelistic campaign in an old cinema building down in the heart of Belfast. A young man in the backseat of the cinema that day and when I made the appeal he was the first to speak and he came down the aisle.

It was Lila's brother. And he said, Mr. Paisley, I'm going to settle it. I want to meet my sister.

I want to have what she got. I can't live without Christ. Thank God that young man got gloriously saved.

Some years later he was killed in a very serious motor accident. In order to try and save the driver of an oncoming vehicle driving on the wrong side of the road he took his tanker that he was driving oil tanker, he took it across the driveway. He saved the man who was in the wrong but he died himself.

But thank God he was ready. But I have another memory that's not a pleasant one. One night I was sent for just when I was a stripling of a preacher to a home.

And when I got there a woman opened the door. She was weeping bitterly. And she said, I'm glad you've come.

But I couldn't send for you until he had gone unconscious. I turned to that woman and I said, woman, you're a fool. What can a gospel preacher do with a man who's unconscious and has only a few hours to live? I went into the bedroom and there lay upon the bed a man.

He had served in the old Royal Irish Constabulary the police force before our land was divided. He then was an officer in the police force of Ulster, the Royal Ulster Constabulary. He was a big man.

A man that had passed through all the Ulster troubles and never flinched in the face of Judae or in the face of the enemy. But he was fighting a battle that he couldn't win. Two of his companions were there.

They tried to hold him in the bed but it seemed as if he had supernatural strength. They pulled him away and he sat up on that bed and he cursed. And then he laid down exhausted and he sobbed.

And he went through that procedure until the body wearied and life broken through the dark door into a lost eternity. I can never forget that scene. If thou hast run with a footman and they have wearied thee how canst thou contend with horror? But there's another scene here.

The old prophet paints a picture of a land of peace where all is well, where everything is for the person, where there seems to be no opposition, no trouble, no weariness. And he says, even in that land of peace wherein thou trustest, they wearied thee. It's a land of peace.

The environment's right. The circumstances are right. There's no physical opposition.

There seems to be no difficulty. All seems to be for the soul. But there's still weariness.

Could I tell you, friend, you can have everything that life gives you. You can climb to the top rung of life's ambition ladder. You can have every want satisfied and every need met.

But at the end of the day in the land of peace you'll still be weary. For life carries with it the sting of weariness and the poison of exhaustion. When I commenced my ministry I had the privilege of having friendship with a very wealthy man in our city.

He was a man of tremendous wealth. In fact, when he died and his fortune was counted up, he left more money than any other person in our land for this whole century. He was a very active politician.

He sat in our local parliament. He sat in the Westminster parliament. He was high sheriff of our city.

He served a long time as the deputy mayor of the city. So he was a well-placed man. And I knew him intimately.

I knew him in political life. Then one day I heard he was ill. And I knew that I had never been faithful to that man about his soul.

So I decided that I must go and talk to him about his soul. I was only a young preacher at the time. I went to his great mansion in fear and trembling.

I didn't know what sort of a reception I was going to get, but I made up my mind that there wouldn't be a drop of his blood in my garment when I had finished. I rang the bell of the great mansion where he lived on the outskirts of our city. His housekeeper came to the door.

She said, The boss will be glad to see you come in. She showed me into a room and he was sitting in a chair. And it wasn't hard to know that his days were numbered.

He said to me, What brings you here? I said, You are the reason for my coming. He says, Why? I said, Well, I've been with you for many years. We've been friends.

He says, That's right. We've been good friends. I said, That's right.

But I said, I failed in my friendship. He said, I don't understand you. Well, I said, If I'd really been your friend, I would have talked to you before today about your soul.

And I regret I didn't, but I want to talk to you now. And to my utter amazement, he looked at me and he said to me, Did you know, Ian, that my mother was a Christian? Did you know that in our old home in the country, we used to have prayer meetings and gospel meetings? He said, I know what you're talking about. I said, Well, that makes it easier for me to talk to you.

And I spoke to him about his soul. And I said, Let's get down on our knees and let's get it settled. And he got down on his knees and he knelt beside me.

And I prayed. And then I said to him, Will you now come pray the sinner's prayer? And that man fought a battle. And his whole body seemed to be distorted with a pain that no doubt was the agony of his soul.

And after 20 minutes of a struggle, he cried out with a piercing cry, I can't do it! I can't do it! And he rose to his feet and he said to me as he took me by the hand, he said, No, I can't come. How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of God. He was praying at funeral.

An ungodly minister put him in the front seat of heaven with a crown in his head and a palm of victory in his hand. And the papers carried a wonderful victory notice. And after a while, they carried the fact that he had left more wealth and estates than any other living, any other person in the past years of the century.

In the land of peace wherein thou trustest, they wearied thee, poor wearied soul, rich in goods, rich in land, rich in position, rich in wealth. God said, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required. Now tell me, how wilt thou do? The lamb didn't escape.

The leopard didn't escape. The bear didn't escape. The floodwaters of Jordan rose so swiftly that in their very homes they perished.

And as the man gathered the grapes and harvested the great harvest around the river, they could hear the shrieks of those that the Jordan waters caused to perish. The Jordan for you is flowing in its lower banks, and you think it will never rise to your home, never come to your dwelling place, never overwhelm your soul. Don't be a fool, friend.

The tide's going to rise someday for me and for you. We are going down the valley one by one with our faces toward the setting of life's sun, down the valley where the mournful cypress grows for the stream of death. We are going down the valley.

We are going down the valley. One, how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? I want to tell you, sinner with God's book in thy hand, you'll not do at all. No hope of death! No hope of eternity! As the tree falls, so shall it lie.

He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. He that is unclean, let him be unclean still. He that is unwashed, let him be unwashed still.

He that is unsaved, let him be unsaved still. A lost soul in the swelling of Jordan. What an utter fool you are to go on down life's race without Jesus Christ, to dare to face the horsemen of death and the swelling of Jordan in your own.

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