

# Sudden Death

by Rolfe Barnard

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*Rolfe Barnard's sermon 'Sudden Death' warns of the prevalence of unexpected death in America and the urgent need for spiritual readiness and responsiveness to God's reproof.*

**Duration:** 46:02

**Scripture:** Proverbs 29:1, Matthew 10:14-16, Luke 10:16, Acts 17:28

**Topics:** "Death"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the unpredictability of death and the importance of being prepared for it. He uses examples of individuals who met sudden death without having time to arrange their affairs. The preacher also shares stories of people who resisted God's calling and ended up in hell. He emphasizes the fear of God and the consequences of disobeying Him. The sermon concludes with a reminder that even though some may choose to rebel against God, He continues to call and save those who repent.

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## Transcript

There is one particular thing that distinguishes the United States of America from every other and any other nation on topside of God's earth. That particular distinguishing thing is this, that America has become the land of sudden death. Men who are gifted in and spend their time accumulating facts and statistics assure us that something has happened in the last 30 years to make America, of all the nations on the earth, the land of sudden death.

We are assured, and I'm sure that the men who engage in that tell us the truth, that every time two people in America come to death, one of them comes suddenly. If we could face that, as I want us to try to face it this morning, that every time in America two people pass from this earthly scene into whatever is out yonder on the other side, one of them does so without any time to pray, without any time to seek the Lord, without any time to set his spiritual house in order, if he might. Men get in an airplane today and head for Los Angeles and wind up in the hands of a living God.

Men take a bath now in order that their bodies may be made clean and slip and dash their brains out on the bathtub. Men start across the street to buy some groceries, and they have a head-on collision with a car, and the car wins, and they are ushered out into his hands who created you and bought you without any time for what we call preparation. No other nation is like that.

One is reminded of the old patriarchs, a man like David or Jacob, who will dispose of everything, arrange for all of his children, and then as he turns his back to the wall, says, My time to die and go to sleep with his fathers, having had time to arrange all of his affairs, but not so in America. I wonder why that's so. I think the language of the scripture this morning explains it.

Proverbs 29, verse 1 says, He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, annihilated, not disposed of, but ruined, and that without remedy. It is a matter of history that there has never been a nation of people that has been so blessed by the reprov'g ministry of a holy God, joining the issue, facing men with the eternal controversy between a holy God and sinful men. No other nation has experienced the reprov'g ministry of the Holy Ghost like men and women in America.

That's at once the most blessed thing that could be said of a man or a congregation or a home or a church, and at the same time, it is the most dangerous dynamite this side of eternity. For God is not to be trifled with, and eternal verities are eternal in the consequences of them, and it is a principle that runs through the entirety of the dealings of a holy God with men and women that lights send against brains, not only darkness, but gross darkness. And it is true that the most dangerous thing on earth a man ever did was to be under the public or private proclamation of God Almighty's gospel in the anointing of the Holy Ghost, for no human being can ever be the same for time and eternity.

No matter how weak the vessel of the preacher through whom the message of God comes, you can't hear from heaven and ever be the same again. Oh, you live in the city of which it is prophesied it will go faster than any pot this side of heaven in the next few years, in this awful rat race of men and women with more money than they ever dreamed of. Everybody got from one to five cars, everybody got two or three air conditions, got air conditions in your car, you've got this, you've got that, you've got good jobs, you've got everything.

I know nothing about any other congregation firsthand in the Houston area, but you've got at least one preacher that I know of, I don't have any more, but I know of one that is faithfully as a voice. Bring in God's truth to this community, and you better get you a job somewhere. They did pay you to move to Africa and go as far as you can by plane and then by jeep and then by mule and then walk and then crawl to the deepest jungle in Africa and take a shovel with you and dig a hole in the very center of the darkest place on earth.

And after you've got the hole dug, jump in it and cover yourself up and get away from the light, for your place in hell will be ne'er as bad as if you'd lived in Africa and never heard the name of the Lord of Glory. He said, then to avert it, harden yourself against his demands and experience the truth that God will not suffer forever in a body treating lightly his demands for his Son. For God does bear out this scripture, he that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall, S-H-A-L-L, no doubt about it, though the stars fall, shall all the power of God behind it, all the purpose of God behind it, yes, true, shall be destroyed.

And that destruction, when God begins to cut men off, is utterly, utterly without remedy. Dear old Methodist Sam Jones, you folks who live in Houston ought to remember that name. They took him, the saloon keepers and big shots of Galveston, that's not far away from here, and they took old Sam Jones and literally drove him down the main street of Galveston, outside the city of Galveston.

And told him not to come back, and the next day the fameless Galveston flood wiped the city off the map. They took John Wesley and tied a rope around his long hair and held the rope and whipped him through the streets of Manchester, England, that's still the graveyard of the gospel till this good hour. Oh, how

many people am I speaking to today whom a holy, long-suffering, merciful God has been kind enough to deal with you, hadn't cut you down, harassed you, wouldn't leave you alone, wouldn't let you settle down in your nice little religious hiding place.

Kept whipping you out every time you settled down to rest, and yet today you're a stronghold of rebellion, you're set against the claims of King Jesus. I warn you this morning with something of a heaviness of heart, you're headed not for a peaceful death, you're going to be cut off some of these days and go from Pasadena to hell without even time to pack your suitcase. Brother Preacher, you're trying to scare me, you're dead right, brother.

I wish you could. I'm facing you where the fact of God Almighty cuts men off. Not men who've had no life, if there could be, that's not so.

Not men who've had little life, not the hot and tart in Africa, not the coolie in China, but the man who's been orphaned, reprov'd, cut him off. He's cumbering the ground long enough, cut him off. I'm so glad that God Almighty didn't create this world, build a hell and a heaven.

Eternity is to succeed time. Give men a short time down here where the issues will be decided as to where they'll spend eternity. I'm glad he didn't do that and go fishing.

I'm glad he still reprov'd men. For as I know, he just got one little message. If we skip that, no matter, no use fooling the others, the only controversy I repeated this morning, I think I'm right, there's just one controversy between the Holy God and men and women, and that's who his son is.

And what his son has done, and what God demands from every human being because of who his son is, and what his son has done. I read in the scripture that it be expedient for you that I go away, said the Lord. For I go away the another one, the one who comes alongside.

God manifests in the flesh once, now in the spirit. He'll not come, and if he doesn't come, it'll be bad. But when he's come, he'll reprove, he'll reprove, he'll harass, he'll camp on men's tails, and he'll dig on three things.

Judgment's already passed. What God'll do about sin's already been said. When he laid it on his son, you needn't have any doubts about whether God Almighty'll punish sin.

Just close your eyes, and with other eyes, just hear his son in the grip of the Holy God, crying out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And the answer is, I am holy, and he's in the hands of God. That's settled it, brother. And righteousness, oh, he'll dig it, man, unless you become as perfect as Christ, and as good as Christ, God's going to send you to hell.

He'll measure you not by your opinion, but by the perfection that is in Christ Jesus. But he digs, first of all, of sin. Why? Because men get drunk? Oh, no.

Because men do this? Oh, no. Of sin, because you believe not on me. Everything heads up there.

Get everything else settled. Still, God won't play. The issue of the hour since Eden's garden is the royal claims and demands of Almighty God on all human beings about his son.

Kiss the son, God says, lest he be angry. Send him back to my son, and do it willingly. That's the issue.

And he reproves men right here. You want to say, well, this is getting too tough here now, let's talk about something else. No, no, this is it.

No matter how much you clean up and do this and that, no, this is the issue. And the Spirit of God sticks to the last. Why have you not, in biblical language, believed in Christ? That means accept God's verdict about him and bow to him.

For the rest of your days, that's the issue. And I thank God that although the Spirit seems awfully angry, and it seems like just having to snatch, and you can hear the grind of the agony as he rescues an old man and drags him and saves him as if by fire, I thank God that even now he hadn't quit. He reproves men and women.

But men, and this is utterly unbelievable, but in the theologian, whatever that is, this side of eternity that doesn't just have to throw up his hands and say this just can't be, but it is so. Men, little bitty old teeny weeny men, are able to bow their necks, and clench their fists, and grit their teeth, and run off and hide behind an alibi, and crawl into a place of refuge. And successfully bow, the reproving God, and run off and go to hell.

I can't understand it. But men are able to do it. Don't ask me to unravel that, it's just so.

It's just so. Men do harden themselves against God. Oh, how tragic.

In Oklahoma, God killed seven deacons who were bucking the meeting and making fun of the gospel. He killed them in three days. Every one of them suddenly, great fear came on the community.

The revival fire began to burn. The spirit of God began to work in tremendous fashion. Yet one night, as we stood to sing back in the back of the house, a dear wife could be heard pleading above the singing, Husband, please resist no longer.

Then his little 13-year-old girl joined, with the wife on one side and the girl on the other. I didn't try to stop it. I don't want to get sore off the dock so I can tell the spirit when he's breaking over.

And the 13-year-old girl joined. Bless your heart, that man was succeeding, doing this and almost knocking them both down, and running to the rest of you. And the little 13-year-old girl followed him.

It was summertime, the doors were open, the windows. He ran down the high steps, down toward town, where this little 13-year-old girl followed him. We could hear her saying, please God, quit running from God.

But he outdistanced her and went on down to the nearest joint, and in 15 minutes he is in hell, running from the claims of God, resisting the reproving of the Holy Ghost. In a northern city, after the benediction had been pronounced, is a giant tabernacle, a big old high platform. I finally got down to the front from the people shaking hands.

I felt somebody tugging at my coat tail, and I looked down, little three-and-a-half-year-old, gift of God, curly golden hair, beautiful girl, she's tugging at my coat. I looked at her and she lifted up her arms, I picked her up, she put her little arms around my shoulder, and began to sob. I want my daddy to get saved.

Three-and-a-half-years-old. Was there a carpenter here that saved a little girl? Didn't know what she was talking about, maybe not, I don't know. But she knew the hell of the home.

I want my daddy to get saved. I want my daddy to get saved. Just sobbing like a heartbreak.

Here came my mother, sobbing. She took the little girl out of my arms. And I said to her, I said, now, you do the best you can.

See to it that your husband's listening. Three o'clock, I was on the radio. He wouldn't listen on the radio, but he wouldn't dart into anybody's church house.

I'd been to his house with the pastor numbers of times. He took delight in cursing God's preachers. No less than six times, I can remember, he ordered me out of his house.

Oh, he was tough. The only time he'd ever listen was on the radio. Sometimes he would.

Oh, he had all the answers. He was tough. And this little girl saying, I want my daddy to get saved.

It came to pass in the providence of God that he listened. And about the middle of my message, I asked the radio audience to pardon me. I wanted to send, I thought, a last warning, reproof from heaven to a man that I hoped was listening.

And I said, there's a man I think's listening. Sound of my voice now. You won't attend the divine service.

You take delight showing how tough you are. You order God's preachers out of your house. You're awfully proud.

You're wicked. Your little girl this morning came and broke our heart, says, with her little chubby arms around my neck. She brought a message from heaven's throne.

Oh, Bubba Barnum, I want my daddy to get saved. I said, sir, I think that's the last reproof you'll ever get. I know I said it.

I said, get down there by your radio. Tear that old wicked heart of yours out if you have to. And surrender to God's king.

You know what he did? Got up and snapped the radio off. Got his hat and slammed it on his head. Gave me a curse.

Kicked the radio. Cursed his wife. Went to the nearest tavern.

In less than an hour a man pumped his body full of billets. He is out yonder in the hands of a God who warns he that being often reproved hardens his neck. Hold up this neck.

I won't. I won't. I won't.

I won't. As you will for you. Shall suddenly be destroyed in that without remedy.

God reproves men and women. Thank God. Thank God.

But he warns that he'll not always keep digging around the same tree. After a while, if that tree does not bring forth fruit to glorify God, when his long-suffering has come to the boiling pot, God Almighty faithfully warns, I'll cut it off without remedy. I want to remind you this morning that the God of the Bible makes no apologies for us.



He kills people. He kills people. He kills people.

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He He did it. He kills people. He kills people.

I won't speak on tonight if I can, I'm not certain about it, but the God of the Bible found some little boys that were not willing to follow God-anointed human leadership. Get it now. This generation of spiritual outlaws say, I'll follow no man.

Yeah, you're going to hell. And they had some of that in the Old Testament. And God Almighty, you know what he did? He killed 26,000 people.

Just opened up the earth and dropped them into hell without even time to get a suitcase packed or a toothbrush to carry along and sent them to hell. Oh, this poor preacher knows that I make a mess when I try to get anybody in this awful hour in piety. And we're very familiar now with God.

We're all nice terms with him. There's no reverence. Oh, he's such a nice little fellow.

But that's not the God of the Bible, I'll tell you. No, sir. The God of the Bible kills people.

He's a being often reprov'd. Hardness his neck. What's going to happen to them? Brother, they shall suddenly be destroyed.

And that without remedy. Mordecai hammed the days when God's power was on and came to the town where my wife lived most of her life, Oklahoma. Forty businessmen boycotted, bucked the meeting.

He got up public and said one of the forty men will be dead accidentally, suddenly, tragically within a year. They were. They were.

God killed every last one of them. That's the easiest place to hold a meeting I've ever been in till this good hour. I've been there three times in the great church.

That fear of God has been years ago. Those forty businessmen that bucked God, bucked great light. God killed them.

Oh, hear me. Sam Jones brought his last message from this text. It was in Oklahoma City.

He just spent the time quoting the verse and telling about how he'd seen God do what this verse said. And he pronounced the benediction, didn't have time for an invitation, jumped into a carriage, they held a train for him a little while. He finally got to the train, went in the Pullman berth, sat out on the berth, dog tired, reached over with his hand to untie one of these of the right or left shoelace, pitched over in the Isle of Dead as if to say, by my death I illustrate the fact that men and women are in the hands of God, who doesn't have to go to a great deal of trouble to wind this business up and cut men off.

And he just took old Sam to glory. Oh, you're in the hands of a God who cuts men off. The scriptures say in Acts 17 we live and move and have our being in him.

You cannot draw a breath to utter a profane imprecation without providential God giving you the breath to curse him with. Oh, I wish I could get it into my system. Maybe a little of it ooze out in this generation and that willy-nilly we'll take care of God at some convenient time.

I wish I could remind you that the scriptures say that your breath is in his hands. You cannot wiggle without he gives you the strength to do it. We mankind actually live and every move they make in their very existence is in him, in him, in him.

It is not true that men ought to be sent to hell, but it is true that every last one of us ought to have been in hell a long time ago and nothing but the mercy of God is keeping us from being dropped into hell right through this floor this morning. I can tell you when God Almighty has got it written down, well, he's got it in his books for some lost man this morning. When he's gonna cut you off, kill you, get rid of you, burn you, you are profaning God's air long enough.

You've blown your breath of unbelief and rebellion in his face long enough. Someday he's gonna do what he says he'll do, cut you off, cut you off. Brother Jackson, will you come here please, sir? You're sweet.

This is not a joke. Come here please, sir. I'm gonna ask you now if you wanna make some money.

I know you need it. It's mine. I'll give you \$500.

I'll give you \$500. I haven't got it, but I didn't borrow it. I'm not joking now.

I'll give you \$500. If you walk from here to that back door without God, now, anybody knows you could make it. The devil came to the Lord one time, made him a proposition sort of like this, the Lord wouldn't take him up, but maybe you're a little smarter than the Lord.

You need \$500? All right, just tell out there and say, now, God, I don't need you, I'll do this myself. You want to tackle it? Now, this isn't prearranged, I mean it. I wish we'd get this truth over to somebody this morning.

Don't you think you could make it near that door without God? You don't, actually? Brother, you live, thank you, dear one, and you move, and you have your vision. I doubt not that he could make it, but I ain't fixin' to try, but I don't know. I don't know, all God hath to do, just that next breath, oh, bud, you livin' in God's world like you can get along without me.

You think you created yourself? No, you didn't, I gave you life. You think you furnished the strength? No, sir, I gave it to you. Now you men are in the hands of God, and you'll move and live and exist, and you'll exist and move and live just as long as God shows mercy and doesn't cut you off.

But the God of the Bible cuts men off. He that be an orphan reprov'd, hardness his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed. And that without remission.

On the 22nd night of December, years since, in the city of Detroit, Michigan, a woman sat beside a young woman, I'll never forget it, on the fourth row benches from the front. The Christian woman, I presume, was on the edge, and the young lady by her. Directly we stood and began to sing.

I noticed that the woman put her hand on the young lady's shoulder, and that it made, and she said something, and it made the young lady extremely angry. And I couldn't help it until I get to the judgment I'm going to keep on believing that I was under orders. And I had to go down, oh, it was a big old high pulpit, big old tabernacle outfit, and everybody took out, you know, and watched me, but I couldn't help it.

And while they sang, I went down those winding stairs, and yelled out, yelled out. I said, Lord, I ain't got a single last to say. But I walked on.

And I, I, I didn't have anything to say, but I had to go. Went down, started walking. I said, Lord, you'll have to tell me what to say.

He wouldn't say a word. And when I got there, I looked up. He didn't tell me there's no hell.

I saw it. I never got to say a word. The young lady beat me to it.

She said, for Christ's sake, leave me alone. I said, as you wish. That's all I said.

Of course, I had to keep my mouth shut. If you invoke, do it. Tell me, say, in the name of him who spoke, who the stars became.

To keep this universe from smashing to pieces every second of the day. If you invoke his name, say, for Christ's sake, leave me alone. Here's one preacher that'll start running.

And I did. On the first day of January, that's the 22nd of December, I remember, she and her fiancé were in her coupe, little coupe, you remember? They were driving through the traffic of Detroit, Michigan, to have New Year's lunch. And they had what the Detroit Free Press published the next day, an accident.

Their little coupe and the big old five, big car, ran head on. There were eight people, as I remember, in the big car. Not a one of them was hurt.

Her young man fiancé was not hurt. She was instantly killed. The papers talked about meeting a death accident, but she didn't.

I know exactly what happened to her. One time, my lord, got his disciples, and paired them up two by two, said, Skidaro, take this message. Take it! And he said, don't stop to explain much, just take it! Do it for America! And go through the cities.

Come on! The British are coming, judgment's coming. Take it. And then he gave them this precious promise, he that heareth you.

How's a man going to hear from God now? He's coming by hearing, hearing by the word of God. Your pastor says, keep on your word! Or go to hell, one or the other, that's it. He that heareth you, he'll have to hear from some lip of clay.

He'll ask me, brother, spit on your hand, tell the devil to go back to hell! I came from, I apologize to no man! When you hear me, watch out! You're hearing from God, he that heareth you! That's what God says, heareth me. No apologists, please! With a holy unction of the Lord! I think all hell may split, but an ounce should proclaim it. He that heareth you, heareth me.

But the verse continues, he that despises, treats rightly, treats rightly, treats rightly, you, despises me, said the Lord. He that despises the preacher or the witness, despises the Lord Jesus. He that despises the Lord Jesus, despises the God of the universe, who sent me.

And when I walked down that aisle, when she looked me in the face and said, for Christ's sake, leave me alone. Ladies and gentlemen, she wasn't just talking to me. She's talking to the Lord, glory.

And on the first day of January, he just left her alone. That's all God has to do to send you to hell right now before we can have an invitation. Just take his hand off of you.

That's all. Drop you in the hell. God answer the prayer.

Oh, as to set this congregation, didn't make near as many as you should. If you get in here and quit playing rumble, beg a lot of you, act like you know the Lord. Said you made over 3,000 visits a month before I came.

Well, keep on. Remember, if you go with God's message, you don't go alone. And remember, it's full of dynamite.

They despise you, they despise him. Remember, if they hear you, they hear him. Oh, and to hear him, who after a while, cuts men off, is to treat lightly.

Treat lightly those who bring the message. Don't ever give up. The last word, this destruction without remedy.

When God cuts you off, that's it. That's it. Bad enough when a daughter, father and mother said, don't come home.

You're no longer our daughter. Bad enough, but when God almighty unsheathes the arm of power to take Jack, cut that boy off, it's utterly without remedy. That's it.

That's it. Dwight L. Moody brought what proved to be his last message in Kansas City, Missouri. He didn't know it, of course, but he never preached again.

He was in the municipal auditorium in Kansas City, Missouri. That message which proved to be his last one, he preached on excuses, these little trifling excuses. Men try to lay the blame for their damnation on a holy God.

And he began to unravel them. Here was his invitation. After he'd finished preaching, he said, how many people here in this auditorium wish to send a telegram to heaven? God in heaven, on this and in the date, in the municipal auditorium in Kansas City, Missouri, I have heard your humble servant press your claims for your son on me.

God in heaven, I wish to be excused. Mr. Moody said, let's wind up this battle. Let's come to an end of all this foolishness.

Let's just do business with God. Let's just send him a telegram. Now be honest for one time in your life.

Come on out, Milton, for just one time in your life. And just say, God, I beg to be excused. I will not bow to your demands for your son in my life.

I won't do it. That settles it. He said, I want you to stand.

Well, nobody did. By standing, but with the judgment we'll find out how many of them did it in their hearts. And then he said, all right, how many people here wish to send God a telegram? Said, the line's open.

It's open. God in heaven, on this certain day in this place, I've heard your humble servant press upon me the claims you have for your son and your demands. I beg not to be excused.

I beg to be accepted. And I turn myself over to him who with eyes like this I've never seen but in faith I turn myself over to your son and say to him, take me and break me and if it pleases you save me. And the people stood.

In the good providence of God this is next to the last time perhaps I'll face you. I come this morning and ask you to send a telegram to God. God in heaven on this 11th day of July in the year of our Lord, 1965 I've heard a little preacher saying over and over again there's just one controversy between the holy God and me and that's his son.

He says, I've made him Lord. He said there's no life anywhere except in him. He says he's the only one who can give eternal life.

He says all of my love is channeled to men through my son. He's tried to say over and over again it's a matter of bowing to God's proclamation. Kiss my son.

Bow to my son. That's what it means to receive him. That's what that word that's so abused means to accept him for what he is.

I'm going to send God a telegram saying I ain't going to do it. I will not do it. I'll go back to my church where I claim to be a Christian and spend my life trampling his holy law under my feet.

I will not come under to the Lord Jesus Christ. I just want God and I want God to know it. Come on, be honest.

I doubled all day to be honest once and stand up. I mean it. Let's send a telegram to God.

I might have been coming to every other service and rededicating and say why don't you bow to Jesus and get this thing started. Say quit healing your wounds and sparkling and blubbering around and do not look God but a total surrender. If you don't intend to do it say that great big will the preacher say you've got and stand on your feet right now I want everybody to look at me.

Leave me alone. I don't want God and nobody else fooling with me. This die is cast.

I will not bow to the Lord. I'll meet you at the judgment one time I'll try to get you to be honest. Stand up.

Be honest at least. Might help you a little in hell that you're honest. Quit hiding.

If you won't I've come to the moment of invitation. How many people this morning will say God and heaven on the 11th day of July and hear of our Lord and Savior.

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