

The Possibility of Death

By Keith Daniel

God says *It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*¹ It is appointed. No matter how you die, it doesn't take God by surprise. Your life will be taken, least of all when you expect it.

By far the most who die today, across the world, will be under the age of 25. Not old people. When is your moment? When you're old, and have fulfilled your dreams, and plans? You're going to do this or that. Oh, only if the Lord wills you'll do this or that. I don't know how God could be clearer in saying there's nothing that will prolong your life one moment more from the moment God knows you to be taken, young or old.

It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. It's a fearful word, judgment. John records the revelation given to him by Jesus of mankind's destination. He says, *I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.*² What a moment.

I saw the dead. Small children, and great grownups, stand before God. Men were crying "I thought to live and die, that's it. I'd end up in a wooden box six feet under the ground. Nothing further. I could live how I wanted to, and that's the end of it. But what's this? I'm eternal. There's never an ending for my soul!"

The Lord Jesus speaks of men suddenly finding themselves in Hell a moment after death. The God of love tells us, in love, that man could feel, could speak, could scream, could look up and see what he missed—I don't know how that's possible, but God says it is—could recognize people he's scoffed at over there. "I am tormented in this flame. Send Lazarus, that the tip of his finger could just put water on me."³

After physical death there's no changing your mind, there's no second chance. There's no saying, all through eternity, "There's some other opportunity God's going to give me. One more opportunity to say 'please give me mercy.'"

It's a fearful thing to fall in the hands of the living God, of an angry God. The hands that died for you, that bled for you. The hands that cry out to you. He could do nothing more to save you than what He's already done. There is no word He could add, no pain more He could suffer, no plan further He could make to make it gloriously possible for you to come and be saved. It's a fearful thing to fall into those hands, if it's past death, and you did not prepare to meet with God.

*I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*⁴

At the moment of death you're in hell, crying out "I'm tormented in this flame." But then, there's the great white throne. Then all will be cast into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second death. A place prepared for Satan and his angels, and all those whose names were not written in the Book of Life, who prepared not to meet with God, who were not washed in the blood of the Lamb. There with the devil and his angels, where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. They have no peace day or night. What more can God say in this Book? What more can God say to you? Flee from the wrath to come! For God said "Flee." *It is appointed for man once to die, but after this the judgment.*

The possibility of death places on me a grave responsibility toward every soul God and man expect me to witness to.

When I was a young preacher, some twenty-five, twenty-six years ago, I worked with a man in South Africa who was the district superintendent of the missionary society I was in. His name was Mr. Fanie Harmse, an Afrikaans speaking South African man. What a man of God. What a privilege God gave

¹ Hebrews 9:27

² Revelation 20:11,12

³ Luke 16:19-26

⁴ Revelation 20:11-15

me as a young worker to have this example of the believers. He walked with God. I learned through that man as a young preacher, just watching him, learning daily. I will be grateful to God for all eternity for all that I learned from that man: his walk with God, his wisdom with souls, his anointed preaching, and his anointed life. Once in awhile he joined up with the young workers who were out there preaching night after night, in town after town, for one or two weeks. Visiting all morning. All afternoon preparing. Every night preaching. Then after the sermons dealing with souls. For years I lived like that, living out of a suitcase. In one of the towns, this godly man came to see the young workers, those under his responsibility. Us, without much wisdom, but full of fire. There he was to keep a watchful eye on us, teach us, warn us, rebuke us when we needed it.

In one of the towns where Mr. Harmse came, he preached that night. The church was full of people from all over town. After the meeting he was standing with the young workers at the door just to say goodnight to all the people and shake their hands. "Come tomorrow, please come back tomorrow for the next meeting. Thank you for coming. Come tomorrow."

Then came this very tall, Afrikaans speaking man, who came along with all the people past Mr. Harmse to leave the church. As he took Mr. Harmse's hand, Mr. Harmse looked at him, said, "Sir, don't you feel that you should come with me right now back into the church and pray, and seek God concerning your soul? Don't you feel that you should come with me and pray now, before you leave this building, to ask God to save you?"

The man was offended. He pulled his hand away and said, "No. Thank you very much. I don't feel I would like to do that at all." He began to walk away.

Mr. Harmse was a gentleman. A Christian is a gentleman, if you're right with God. He wouldn't offend. He was the furthest you would think of a person who could offend that you would ever meet. He shook everyone. He walked after this man, held onto this man's arm, and said with a loud voice, with tears now coming down his face, "Sir, forgive me. I don't want to offend you. But something in my heart tells me that I must beg you to come back and pray with me now and make your peace with God. Something in my heart is crying out. I beg you don't leave this building tonight unless you make your peace with God."

This man pulled himself away, shook his arm, and shouted, "Leave me alone man!" He went through the door angrily. Now everyone was silent, looking at this man. He turned around at the door, and looked back at Mr. Harmse. Tears were coming down Mr. Harmse's face. He felt bad. He said, "Mr. Harmse, I will come back here tomorrow night. Maybe then, if I feel like I would like to pray with you, I will pray with you then. But Mr. Harmse, you were wrong, what you did here to me tonight. You embarrassed me, sir. You were wrong in embarrassing me like this before all these people." He turned and walked out into the dark of the night.

The next morning Mr. Harmse was walking along the pavement with the young workers, in the town. There were cars, traffic, and the bustle of people. Suddenly there was the honking of a car, the screeching of brakes, the thud—oh, it echoed. Right where Mr. Harmse stood in the whole town, there lay the man, dead. Right there at the feet of the man that begged him not to leave the church until he made his peace with God. Tomorrow night never came. There was never going to be another tomorrow night. There was never going to be another opportunity or meeting later on. That was God's last cry to that man. God tried. Don't think Harmse stood there in his own understanding and compassion. It was God crying through a man.

The possibility of death places on me a grave responsibility toward every soul God and men expect me to witness to. Boldly, without any compromise.

Shortly after that incident Mr. Harmse sent us to a town called Umkomaaz, a Zulu name of a town in Zululand. There this young fellow that I was working with and I began to preach. God came. God came, as young as we were. Suddenly the town was seeking God in a way they had never, ever seen before in the history of Umkomaaz. Everywhere souls were coming who had never come near the church, never come near the house of God. They were there, astounding people as they walked in, seeking God to save their souls.

An old man walked up to me toward the end of those meetings. He looked at me and asked, "Do you know why God has visited this town at this time, my boy? Do you know why God has visited Umkomaaz like this?"

I said, "No sir, you tell me." I wanted to know.

He took me by the hand and led me to three other old men. They all wept as they shared this with me. "For over twenty years, we four men, every single day, got down before God and wept for God to come and visit Umkomaaz. Every day. Yesterday. The day before. The day before. We were down before

God. 'Come, God. We will not let Thee go except Thou dost come and bless us.' That is why God is visiting us here. My boy, not through you. We prayed, and we refused to let God go for twenty year. God came." They wept.

The last day of those meetings I was in the church. I was my custom to spend most of the day, where I can, many times the whole day, just preparing. My custom was to stand in the pulpit of an empty church and pray to God "Guide me what to preach." I'd go over every thought, every illustration, every chapter; if I'm just bringing the Word of God, every book. I go over it, preaching it aloud, so that every part of me is taken up with the message. I weighed carefully every word, anointed by God, soaked in prayer, preparing myself to preach that night.

I was in the church, the old Methodist Church of Umkomaaz, when there was a knock at the door. So I went down. There stood a little lady. "Oh Keith, forgive me. I know you're preparing. But something amazing has happened. My brother's a drug addict, a drunk. From a boy he broke Mommy and Daddy's hearts. From a boy he rebelled. We all sought God, we all found Christ, we all served the Lord from when I was little. My brother didn't want God. From a boy he turned his back, from a boy he scoffed, from a boy he was full of scorn at it. He wanted sin. Though all of us followed God, my brother didn't want God. But he's come back to Umkomaaz today. Just arrived. He doesn't know what's happening here. He walked into the lounge. There were a whole lot of ladies there, we were all having tea. He stood listening. Listening to all God is doing. Listening to all the people who have been saved. People he knew, people he grew up with. He shook us all as he stepped forward and said, 'I want to speak to him. I want to speak to that man about God. Would he come and speak to me?' Oh Keith, you don't know what this means. We prayed, we begged God for years, we wept. He wants to speak to someone about God for the first time in his life. Oh, will you speak to him?"

I said, "I can't now. I'm preparing. I'm not the sort of preacher who can just stand up and speak. I wish it was that easy. I have to prepare, or I'll have nothing to say tonight. Won't he come to the meeting?"

She said, "No, we tried. He said he wouldn't appear in front of people the way he's dressed. Even my husband's jacket won't fit him. He said, 'I'm not going. I'm not going like this.' Keith, he said he'll wait. We know you're leaving town tonight. He says it doesn't matter how late it is, he'll wait. If you'll just come and speak to him he'll wait in the house. Please come."

I said, "You tell him I'll come."

That night God singularly blessed the meeting. I don't know how God did it, but I think the whole town was there. There was no room to sit. Everyone, just standing. God met with so many we had to use all the ministers, all the workers, counseling them. Anyone that could help with seeking souls, broken lives. They were just seeking. We were dealing with them, taking their names and addresses for follow-up. Afterward the ministers had a time of prayer, and we looked at our watch. It was a quarter to twelve. I turned to this young fellow that preached with me, and said "It's too late to go and visit him. I don't think he would have waited."

He said, "No, I don't believe someone would have waited this long. Nobody knew this was going to happen, and take all this time. We'll have to just go. We'll have to contact him and arrange to see him some other time, as soon as convenient." So we drove away from the town.

Sunday I had to drive past that same town to go down the south coast of Natal to another town to preach at a Sunday service. I was early, so I drove into the town of Umkomaaz. I went up the hill to the house where this lady stays, and knocked on the door. She opened the door, and my heart just sank. Her eyes were swollen from weeping. She began to weep, loudly, when she saw who it was. She didn't say a word, just turned and walked in. I walked in after her. I sat beside her on the sofa. I was weeping before she said a word.

"Keith, you were the first one in his life he wanted to speak to about God. He said he would wait, no matter how late it was. He waited until twelve-o'clock. Then when we went to find out where you were, we found out you were gone. You left. He was so angry he began to scream, cursing, saying, 'I'll never try again. I'm going to get drunk and doped!' No one knows what happened. They think it was a cigarette in his bed, in the little flat he stayed at, that set the sheets on fire. The whole flat went up like a furnace. In his drunkenness he couldn't get out. He was burned to a cinder the night he wanted to speak to you about God. You didn't come.

"Keith, don't think we judge you too harshly. We heard what happened, all the people we knew. No one judges you. You obviously thought he wouldn't have stayed so late. But Keith would you forgive me for saying such words as I'm about to say to you? Words I hope you never forget till the day you die. Don't rest until you've sought that soul and done everything to help him find God. Don't neglect a soul,

Keith, no matter how tired you are, no matter how late, no matter how inconvenient, no matter how ridiculous the circumstances. Don't neglect to get to a soul that's seeking God and looking to you."

I had to go and preach after that.

As I drove along in the car, I began to weep aloud, and I made a vow to God, that God has helped me to keep to this day after all these years. "I don't care how tired I am. Don't care how late it is. How inconvenient. How ridiculous the circumstances. I will never neglect a soul again, until the day I die, my God, by Thy grace."

You see, the possibility of death places on you and me a grave responsibility toward every soul God and man expect me to witness to.

I was once told that a young drug addict, whose life was almost destroyed, was in a drug addicts' home in Cape Town. He wanted to speak to me. I was urged to speak to him, to get to him. I was preaching, and all sorts of things were going on. Days went by. Eventually I said "Look. I've got to have time to go and see this fellow. I don't know him, he doesn't know me, but everyone involved with him wants me to get to him."

So I was given this car, went down to the center of the city, to the place where they have this big home, renovated, for all the drug addicts. Young people are there who witness and testify to all these smashed lives coming out of all the wicked places in the world. If there's any interest they take them back to a big place where they sing, give them coffee, testify, and try lead them to Christ. If anyone comes to Christ of these broken lives they take them to this building. They dress them, feed them, and try everything they can to them through on a foundation of God. There he was in this place.

As I walked in the foyer there was a little lady there. She looked like an angel. As she saw me the tears came down her face. "Oh, we've been expecting you," she said. "We knew you were going to come. But you're too late. He left. He smashed the place up. He'll never come back. I don't know why he ever came here. He's caused us to go through such terrible times. He wasn't interested in seeking God. I don't know why he waited so long, but you missed him by twenty minutes. He's gone."

I said, "But surely you know where he's gone. There's some forwarding address I suppose."

"These people don't have an address, Mr. Daniel. They lie in the gutters in the night where they're beaten up, where they're drugged out of their minds. The gutter's their home. I don't know where you'll find him. He'll never come back here. He's gone. You missed him. I'm so sorry."

I asked for a description of what he looked like. I got into the car, started driving down the blocks of Cape Town. Away from the building. Down this block, up that, looking at every face that could possibly answer to the description of this young fellow. I couldn't find him. As I was driving I began to weep. Groan. "Oh God, don't let him die. I could never face that lady who begged me to go. Oh God, don't let him die! Keep him from death. Help me to find him, God." I wept as I drove, knowing he could die.

Darkness fell on the city. I'd arranged to meet someone right then, outside of the old Lutheran Church in the heart of Cape Town, where I'd preached so many times. There in the car we sat, through the night when the world goes out, you know. Cars in their thousands, people in their hundreds, all off to the pleasures of the city. I was sitting in the car, in the heart of this massive city. Suddenly, there was this thud and the whole car shook. The person next to me started screaming. I turned and looked. There was a young fellow, long blond hair, covered with blood, shirt ripped. I thought to myself, "He looks like an animal." He seemed to have lost all feeling. About that time he ran again, headfirst, not stopping until he smashed his head into the car. The whole car shook again. The blood started coming worse. He pulled himself up in the window and screamed "Oh please, give me money. I need money."

I pushed the door open. The person sitting next to me said, "For God's sake, Keith, get back in the car. He's going to hurt you. He's dangerous. Get back in the car."

I pulled myself out and slammed the door. I stood there and looked at him. Because I knew who this was. You see, I know God. And I know how obliged God is when we weep like that. When we're so scared of something going wrong like that. I knew who this was. I looked at him and I said "You are. . ." and I gave his name.

He seemed to sober up. He looked at me carefully, and said, "I don't know you, sir. How do you know me? How do you know my name?"

I said, "Don't doubt that this is God that brought this together." I told him how people sent me, begging me to get there. How I missed him by twenty minutes. How I drove through the streets, weeping to God to find him. How the dark fell. I said, "Look at this city. Look at these cars. Thousands of them. Look at this! You walked through this city past all those cars, past all these people, to this car, to this man. Don't think that just happened. God brought you here. And if God brought you here He won't mock me and you,

that can't do anything for you. God is able to save you, or He wouldn't have brought you here. I won't let you go. I may never see you again. I don't care how drugged you are. I believe God can save your soul now. I don't care how gripped you are by the devil, I don't care how destroyed you are by the devil, I don't care what grip Satan's got on your life: I believe Christ. If you get on your knees with me now on the street He'll set you free for all eternity."

Oh, the miracle I saw. It is one of the greatest miracles God ever let me see, what God did to that life at that moment. There's nothing God can't do, beloved, nothing. I saw a man, who was so drugged he couldn't feel suddenly standing in the streets of Cape Town, lifting his hands, and beginning to worship the God Who had found him. I saw him sober up, as sober as you and I are right now, sober enough to ask God to save his soul.

Do you know what drove me through those streets weeping, groaning, in a way God *had* to do that? This one thing: the possibility of death.

The possibility of death places on me a grave responsibility toward every soul God and man expect me to witness to.

My wife and I were standing at a door of a home in Port Elizabeth, knocking. My wife was expecting our third child, and was uncomfortable, standing with me, knocking at this door. After awhile Jenny said to me, "Keith, how long are you going to stand here knocking? You're just knocking and knocking. There's no one there! Please, Keith, take me home. I'm not well. I can't stand like this."

I said, "Oh Jenny, I'm so sorry." I led her back to the car. At the car, suddenly—I could never put into words what happened—my heart just sank, and I began to weep.

Jenny looked at me and asked, "What's wrong with you? Why are you weeping?"

I said, "I don't know. I don't know, Jenny." I looked back at the home, and I began to run. I ran, weeping. I got back to the door, and I started banging on that door. Banging and banging, weeping.

Jenny got beside me and said, "Keith, what are you doing? We're going to get into trouble. You don't bang on people's doors like this! What's wrong with you?"

I said, "Jenny, I don't know." I saw this little window, and climbed up on the pipes against the wall. I held the window open and I cried out "Oh, can you hear me? Give God a chance! It doesn't matter how destroyed your life is. It doesn't matter how hopeless it is. God can heal you. God can make life more beautiful than it's ever been, if you'd just allow Him to save your soul. Give God a chance!" I began to talk about what God did to me, my brother, my father, my mother.

Suddenly the door opened. I got down. The lady of the house kept the door on a chain, and there was just a little gap. I looked at her face. Oh, she was crushed by life. She was heavy laden, tears coming down her face. I saw she wasn't going to let me in, so I asked Jenny for a piece of paper and a pen. I wrote my telephone number down and said "Listen. I know you won't let me in now, but when you're ready—I don't care if it's twelve-o'clock in the night—you phone me, I'll come. When you're ready to ask God to save you. Give Him a chance." She took the paper and shut the door.

The next morning the telephone rang. "Mr. Daniel, I am the lady whose home you came to yesterday. I couldn't let you in for fear of what you'd see. That's why I didn't open the door when you knocked. As you knocked, I had just that moment put a rope around my neck as I stood on a ledge in the lounge. You knocked as the rope was around my neck. I thought, 'Who could this be? Could this be my husband? No, he would never come back to me. Not my husband. Would it be my son? No, no, not even my son would ever come back to his mommy. Never again. I don't care who it is, I will wait until he stops knocking.' I waited until you stopped knocking, sir. And then I began to fall. I felt a choking. I don't know what made you come back, sir, and bang. But the way you banged I got such a shock I pulled myself out. I didn't know I had the strength. It was the shock, and the way you were banging. No ever banged on my door like that. I somehow got up, and I was stunned to think I could have gotten up. I loosened the rope, and suddenly through the window you started crying out 'Oh give God a chance. It doesn't matter how destroyed your life is, give God a chance.' You started crying out through that window things I've never heard in my life. I stood there and I thought to myself 'This, this must be God Who sent this man. This man knows nothing of me. The moment I stood and put the rope around my neck he knocked. Then to bang like this, and to cry out like this now. God must have seen what I was doing. God sent this man. I know that.'

"Oh, Mr. Daniel, I didn't let you in my home yesterday for fear of what you would see I was doing. But I'm ready now. I want you to come back now to my home. I want you to help me to find the God that sent you and stopped me the moment I was going to kill myself. I want you to come back now. I want you to bring that wife of yours. I looked at her face. And I thought to myself 'There must be a God, if

there's someone left on earth who can look this pure.' I want you to bring her with you. I want the privilege of that lady in my home. Come and help me find the God Who sent you."

The possibility of death places on me a grave responsibility toward every soul God and man expect me to witness to.

People, everywhere I go, say to me, "Keith, how can you look at anyone in the face today and say God is a God of love when so many people are suffering across this earth that God made? How can God be a God of love? There's so much suffering."

I don't have all the answers. I wish I did. But this I know, that when a man, a woman, a child, is absolutely surrendered—that's the words of Andrew Murray, the holiest man who ever lived in South Africa, no doubt—and God fills him with His Holy Spirit, that man, from that moment, is led by God to souls that are hurting every step he takes. That man is driven with a compassion for souls that are hurting.

There's a consciousness that God is with you when you get to the top of an escalator and a woman looks at you and bursts into tears. God sent you to her. When you're knocking on a door, and a woman's about to put her life into eternity, God sent you. When a man who didn't ever want God in his life says "It doesn't matter how late—I want you to come." God sent you. Don't ever let it be said you didn't go.

When you are absolutely surrendered to God the Holy Ghost you're led and driven by God the moment God has control. This tells me of the love of God. The love of God is seen in Christ more than anything we could ever know. But the love of God is seen in you and me, friend, when we're absolutely surrendered. The world needs proof that God is love. Let me tell you, God is longing for one person anywhere who will absolutely surrender, and all God does from that moment is lead them straight to the souls that are hurting that He can heal. God loves through us, when we're absolutely surrendered, when we're filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, when you're filled with the Spirit don't think it's like a glass of water that's not filled. The Holy Spirit is a Person. There can't be half a person in you. He dwells in you. But being filled with the Spirit isn't like filling the empty half. All it means is He has absolute control of you. It only happens at absolute surrender. When you give over the fight to God and say, "Lord, have Thy way." The fight is finished. God takes control. Your lips become God's lips; your eyes become God's eyes. You suddenly don't see people as people, you see everyone as souls. You see a person you're standing with even for three minutes as a soul. Suddenly you realize their blood is on your hands, as no other Christian might stand for three minutes alone with this person. You find a boldness in your character as you say even one word, and if you can't you say a prayer from the depth of your heart. You carry tracts. You hold them out and say "Just read this." Even if that's all you do, but you're there. You're suddenly geared by God for souls to be saved, when you're absolutely surrendered.

I want you to pray to God in absolute surrender as never before in life. I want you to pray to God to make you a soul winner. I want you to say to the Lord, "Lord, it doesn't matter how late, how tired I am, how inconvenient it is. I will never neglect a soul, because the possibility of death places on me a grave responsibility to every soul God and man expect me to witness to till the day I die." Speak to God about this.

Have dealings with God.

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