



A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH

by Vincent M. Newfield

The surroundings seemed the same. The house, the workshop and the beauty parlor where my grandmother cut hair were all left untouched. Yet something was definitely different. *Both* of my grandparents were now gone, and as I stood in their yard, a deeper realization of death came over me.

Within three weeks, my vibrant ninety-two-year old “Paw-paw” went from driving a car and leading a fairly normal life to passing into the next. The stark reality was that he took *nothing* with him—nothing except his faith in Jesus. Thankfully, thirty-five years earlier, he had asked God to forgive him of his sins and had invited Jesus to come live in his heart. It was at that point he passed from death unto life and became a **beneficiary** of the hope of Christ’s resurrection (see John 5:24).

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. —Romans 3:23 NLT

As good as my grandfather was before he accepted Jesus, he was still a sinner who needed God’s mercy, grace and forgiveness. All his good works could not erase the wrongs he had done; he could never be *good enough* on his own to win God’s favor and get back in right relationship with Him. And the same is true for you and me. **Yet, that’s not the end of the story! God did not leave us without hope, lost in our sin.**

Romans 3:23-25 in The Message Bible puts it plainly: *...We are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives God wills for us, [so] God did it for us. Out of sheer generosity he put us in right standing with himself. A pure gift. He got us out of the mess we’re in and restored us to where he always wanted us to be. And he did it by means of Jesus Christ. God sacrificed Jesus on the altar of the world to clear that world of sin. Having faith in him sets us in the clear.*

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. —Romans 3:23 NLT

As we celebrate Easter, we might ask, “Why did Jesus need to die such a hideous death?” He died on the cross to pay the price for our sins. Isaiah 53:4,5 declares that *...it was **our** pains he carried—**our** disfigurements, all the things wrong with us. We thought he brought it on himself, that God was punishing him for his own failures. But it was **our** sins that did that to him, that ripped and tore and crushed him—**our** sins! He took the punishment, and that made us whole. Through his bruises we get healed* (The Message).

God is holy—pure, spotless and without sin. Nothing and no one stained with sin can enter His presence. Through Adam, the first man, sin entered the world (see Romans 5:12-19). The only way we could be restored into right relationship with God and be able to enter His presence again is to have our sins removed from us. We could not do this in our own strength, so God, Himself, came to earth in the form of man as Jesus and paid the *wages* for our sins. He was **gruesomely** crucified and shed His life’s blood to cover the cost for our sins. *For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness* (Hebrews 9:22 NLT).

...Each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment (Hebrews 9:27 NLT).

Like my Paw-Paw and many of your loved ones, all of us will one day die. We will leave every material possession we have. The question is, what will become of you afterwards? Eternity is a long time to spend with a wrong decision. Make the right decision *now*—*behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation* (2 Corinthians 6:2KJV). If you don't know Jesus personally... if you have never asked God to forgive you of your sins and invited Jesus, His Son, to come and live in your heart, I invite you to take a moment and do it *now*. Just say...

"Father God, I come to you just as I am. I've done many things wrong, and I'm a sinner. I ask You to forgive me of everything wrong I've ever done, and wash me clean. Jesus, I believe You are God's Son. Thank You for coming and dying in my place, for my sins. Come and live in my heart. Show me how to live. I need You to lead my life, and I want You to be my best friend. Thank You, Father, for hearing my prayer and forgiving my sins. In the name of Your Son, Jesus, Amen."

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