

## **“We don’t have the promise of a minute!”**

By Roelf L. Ruffner

It all happened in a flash! One minute I was traveling down the highway early on a Sunday morning for my appointment with the Lord and His brethren. The next minute, I was parking my car on the side of the road after an accident. I am thankful I swerved missing the rear end of the truck in front of me and struck his door instead. At that moment it dawned upon me that no one was hurt and no one was dead – only a busted headlight casing on my car. At the rate of speed (about 55 mph) I was traveling I could have been dead. As my grandmother Langley used to say, “We don’t have the promise of a minute!”

On Tuesday of the next week I took part in the funeral of one of our members who had died Saturday night. As I sat there I thought, “This funeral could have been for me.” The following are some thoughts concerning life and death.

Human life is a fragile thing.

The Holy Bible is replete with warnings of the fragility of humanity. “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away” (1 Peter 1:24). Americans living today have an average lifespan of 78 years old but that is no guarantee of longevity. We must teach each other about the slender thread of existence we hang by and the need to ever change in accordance with God’s word. As I heard one preacher proclaim at the end of his sermon, “Some of you in this audience may never hear the Gospel invitation extended again.”

God chooses the time to take us.

God has given us freedom of choice in this life (Josh. 24:15). We may think we are extending our life by avoiding bad habits and dangerous situations. (Both are good decisions.) But our time table is not God’s. Speaking of a rich fool Jesus said, “But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” (Luke 12:20).

King Herod Agrippa I died suddenly because of his blasphemy, “And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost” (Acts 12:23). Looking at his own mortality Job said, “For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living” (Job 30:23).

The end is permanent.

Too many, young and old, live their lives as if they were immortal. They see death as something that can be bargained away or endlessly delayed. At funerals (Now referred to as “Celebrations of Life.”) we all come face to face with our own mortality. I should realize that that casket is where I will be someday, if the Lord tarries. I might think, “No! I still have things to do and things to see.” At death all my possessions that possessed me, my unattained goals, my good intentions, my human relationships, and my momentary pleasures will be no more, forever.

We must be ready!

The Holy Bible warns us that the end of our sojourn on this earth is closer than we think. And the next event after our death will be our judgment before the Creator. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Everyone should be prepared for our death or the Lord’s return, whichever comes first. “...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2b).

The question of life.

The real question of life is not “Was my life meaningful?” or “Will I leave behind a heritage – will others remember me?” The question I should ask about my short existence on this planet must be, “Am I ready to meet the Judge?” “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...” (2 Cor. 5:10-11a). Dear reader, are you and I ready?