

‘YOUR LIFE WILL BE DEMANDED FROM YOU’

# True Thoughts *in* Troubling Times

By Jeff Hopper

**W**e do not live in an easy hour. Forces of evil, whether borne on the backs of ideological conspirators or festering in the heart of a single murderous individual, whether riding on the bullets of gang members or in the bombs of maniacs, are out there. And perhaps more than ever, we know it. For every lit fuse, a hundred news outlets stand ready to broadcast the mayhem.

If in the midst of all this you're not sleeping well at night, your anxiety stands little chance of recovery when you waken in the morning to the opinions of your Facebook friends and their favorite pundits—this one staunchly for gun control, that one adamantly against it. Their ideas may have exceptional merit; what they don't supply is comfort, and certainly not assurance.



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Should you be one with a spiritual inclination at a time like this, you may turn to the Scriptures, looking to see if there is any wisdom from God for days like these. There is, of course. But what you will not find are guarantees.

When we consider the sovereignty of God, we can rightly say that you are bulletproof until he calls your name. This does not mean that you should challenge death with fast driving or poor eating, for if we also possess an understanding

no one have guns,” cries the first, “and tragedies wouldn’t happen.” Then comes the retort: “Don’t be naive! Let *everyone* have guns and these menaces will stay home.”

Religion too enters the conversation. “What we all need is God—cry out to him and he will heal our land!” is met with “Prayer isn’t working—we need action!”

Politics and religion aside, ill-minded people prepared to inflict lethal damage will succeed in

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that we are called to minister to one another, we must steward that calling with reasonable attention to our health and well-being. But what it does mean is that if God has a plan for you on the earth tomorrow, he will not call you home today.

Yet this is where we find the lack of a guarantee, because God *will* call us home, each and every one of us. We simply don’t know when.

Jesus’ teaching could be as dark at times as it was uplifting. In the twelfth chapter of Luke, he told what has become known as “The Parable of the Rich Fool,” but you don’t have to be rich for its conclusion to apply to you.

*“The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’*

*“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’”*

*“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’*

*“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”*

**T**wo truths ring clear from this unnerving story. First, we must be prepared at all times to die. Second, we must be prepared to face God when we die.

It is easy for those next-morning opinion-givers to present their solutions as absolute. “Let

carrying out their plans, even in the most secure environments, at least some of the time. But this is only a reminder that sudden death can come by accident or catastrophe or physical affliction, and it can come when you least expect it. A death may be untimely, but it is still a death.

This is why experts in life-planning make it a point to tell those listening to include the end of life in your preparations. They call this getting your house in order, and the to-do list for this includes matters like life insurance, wills, estate plans, personal gift designations, and funeral and burial plans. Certainly men and women in their later years normally attend to these matters, but there is no age too young for some of this work, especially if you are married and have a family. Ignoring wise planning for the day when you die can result in inconvenience and even true hardship for the loved ones you leave behind.

So when you look around and see tragedy occur in the way it has recently come to those in Paris and Colorado and California (and possibly other places by the time you read this article), you should be saying to yourself, “Is my house in order?” just as you might ask this of yourself if you lose a friend to a sudden heart attack or a traffic accident.

But there are greater things still to keep in mind when considering whether you are prepared to die. Both religious and secular counselors would encourage you to “make peace” with family members and past friends, if there has been tension or even estrangement between you. Many of us figure there will be time enough for this, when we are fading on our deathbed. But many

deaths in old age also come without chance to speak again to those with whom we should make amends. Now is the time for reopening relationships that need restoration.

All of this instruction is important and can have a real impact on the legacy you leave—and not just on how you are remembered. It is one thing to be motivated by pride in one's character, but it is more noble still to keep in mind that others will live on after you, shaping their lives as you have on the patterns and examples set for them by their predecessors. This is a function of legacy, and it should be more than a transfer of wealth.

And yet, like the rich man in Jesus' story, we can be fooled into thinking that the stuff of earth is enough for us. We can even provide an example of solid character and selfless love for others, but miss the greatest necessity of all: coming to terms with God. You may be perfectly ready for the moment you die and not at all prepared for the moment after. This is the very thing Jesus meant when he said that the wealthy man in his story was "not rich toward God."

**I**n a world marked by horrors and potential horrors, you must prepare to survive. Californians make contingencies for earthquakes, Midwesterners for tornadoes, New Englanders for ice storms, and Southerners for hurricanes. Those who lived on the Pacific Coast during World War II blacked out their homes at night to hide targets from the enemy, and now law enforcement agencies are releasing videos to instruct us in what to do to shield ourselves from an active shooter. Practical planning can help you stay alive even when the worst trouble comes.

But rarely does everyone escape menace, be it of natural or human forces. This is why we must also do our spiritual due diligence—or why we must be prepared in case "this very night [our] life will be demanded from [us]."

Spiritual due diligence is an investigation—you might even call it an education—into who God is and what provisions he offers for our eternal life. Various religions present differing views on how (or whether) eternal life can be attained, and

you can find out more about what separates these views in the Spiritual Due Diligence study series referenced at the end of this article. Here, though, we will center on five main aspects of what the Bible often calls the Gospel, or the Good News of Jesus Christ.

## THE CORE OF THE GOSPEL

### 1

God himself is holy and he calls his people to a holy standard.

### 2

With only one exception, no person past or present has been able to live up to this standard. Missing this standard, in every big and small way, is called sin.

### 3

Because of our sin, we do not have access to God or the eternal life he offers. Unholy people cannot live in the presence of a holy God.

### 4

The one exception to sinfulness is Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, who lived a life completely righteous before his Father, died a sacrificial death so that his blood might wash away the sins of humanity, and was raised from the dead in a demonstration of how God can render new life to those whose bodies have succumbed.

### 5

Each of us must consider this explanation of our standing before God and choose whether to believe that Jesus' death can save us and his resurrection can lead us to eternal life. Because he alone is righteous before God, it is only by placing our faith in his righteousness to restore us to God that the promise of eternal life will be delivered to us.

*(Each of these aspects is explained in Scripture passages listed at the end of the article.)*

People since ancient days have asked meaningful questions about life and God. Even some of the Bible's own prophets and kings wanted to know why God allowed trouble, especially when it came from the hands of wicked enemies. Such questions continue into our time: *Why do children die? What if a good person follows a different God? Isn't science providing a better explanation of the universe?*

## The risen Jesus, exalted as eternal king, will restore the broken world.

The Bible, however, consistently recognizes a demarcation between what happens on earth and what happens in heaven. In many ways, humanity has caused its own problems, rejecting God—all the way back to the very beginning—and attempting to make a life for themselves without him. While God can and sometimes does intervene quite dramatically, many still explain him away. “Why doesn't God step in?” many have asked. Sadly we see that millions would not believe him even if he did.

Jesus told his disciples, “In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” Because Jesus said “you will have trou-

ble,” we know he did not mean that he had halted the forces of evil as they exist in the world. Rather, he was offering another reality altogether, a future apart from this world and its sin-stained troubles.

At the end of time, Scripture teaches, the risen Jesus, exalted as eternal king, will restore the broken world and we will dwell with him, accessing

heaven and enjoying the wonder of God without fear or tragedy. This is the overcoming Jesus offers, and in believing and receiving it, we live prepared not only for the day we die—whenever and however that comes—but we live also prepared for the day after we die, when we will hear from our Savior, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord.” 🎉

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### SCRIPTURE

The following selected Bible references explain and support the content of this article:

#### **The holiness of God**

*Leviticus 11:44, 1 Samuel 2:2, Psalm 111:9, Isaiah 6:1-5, Revelation 4:8, Revelation 15:3-4*

#### **The sinfulness of humanity and the consequences of sin**

*Genesis 3:1-19, Psalm 14:1-3, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23a*

#### **The perfection of Jesus, the provision of his death, and the power of his resurrection**

*Luke 4:33-34, John 1:14, Philippians 2:5-11, Luke 23:26-24:12, Hebrews 9:11-28, 1 Corinthians 15:35-57*

#### **The offer of salvation**

*John 3:16-17, Mark 2:15-17, Luke 19:10, Acts 2:36-41, Romans 6:23b, Romans 10:9-11*

#### **The eternal reign of Jesus**

*1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Timothy 1:17, Revelation 5:11-14, Revelation 21:1-8*

### RESOURCES

The Spiritual Due Diligence studies referenced in this article are available as free PDF downloads at [www.linksplayers.com/learning/bible-studies](http://www.linksplayers.com/learning/bible-studies).