

If You Could Know the Outcome...

If you could know the outcome of one day of your future would you want to know and what day would that be?

Many say that they would, in fact, like to know the outcome of one day of their future and often point to days that they anticipate as being positive experiences. Take for instance the outcome of a wedding day, or the first day with a first child, or landing a dream job, or possibly the outcome of a major sporting event. A guy told me, "I'd like to know about tomorrow, so I could get the winning lotto numbers." Knowing something good is in your future tends to brighten the days between now and then. Who wouldn't want to know about something good—something to look forward to?

On the flip side, some say that they don't want to know their future. They are afraid it would rob them of the element of surprise and could make life rather boring. Others say that knowing something of their future could change the way they behaved and so they don't want to know. They don't want it to affect the way they are living now. "I'm content to take things one day at a time," has often been the reply.

It seems as if the older you are the more likely you are to want to know the outcome of your last day. Especially since that would tell you *when* your last day would be. Knowing when would sober us into making sure we ramped up the quality of our remaining days—doing the things we've always wanted, saying the things we felt we should, etc. A man once told me, "I would want to make the most of what I've got left and so I'm trying to do that anyway."

A few have questioned that if they could know about just one day, would they be able to change the outcome of that day based on what they did between now and then, especially if a disease or death would be involved. Could they thwart some sort of disaster or bad

experience? Because of our will to live we see that such information would be useful in preserving what is precious to us. A gas station attendant admitted, "I'd want to know, only if I could do something about it. If I can't change anything, then I probably don't want to know."

So, what if you could? What if you could know the outcome, and have the opportunity to somehow change it? Would you?

And so we get to the heart of my question. It's one that is actually spiritual in nature and involves all people everywhere. My own answer to the question, "If you could know the outcome of one day of your future would you want to know and what day would that be?" is yes... I want to know about the day *after* my last day. Specifically, what happens to us when we die?

The going death rate in America is 10 out of 10. What's the saying, "There are 2 things you can count on in life, death and taxes?" Well I'm not so sure about the taxes (I know some people who are good at getting out of that), but I'm pretty sure about the death thing. No one survives. And the thing about it is, we are going to be dead a lot longer than we're alive. So it seems reasonable to be very concerned about the state you find yourself in after you're gone. I mean, I'm already scared to death of "getting dead," but what's on the other side seems so much bigger.

The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27 that "man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment."

A very popular assumption is that if my good outweighs my bad then I should be OK when I get there. "I'm a pretty good person, and I think God is going to take that into consideration." But what would concern me is this: How good is good enough? Where is the line drawn to let me know if I really am OK?

Hence, the “Good Test.” How do you know if you are a good person? Do you think you are good enough? The Bible gives us a test for this and it is based on the 10 Commandments.

Why the 10 Commandments? The Bible tells us that God wrote with His own finger on the stone tablets the expression of His nature, which is moral perfection. Thus, He set the bar for His standard of good as defined by these 10 laws.

So are you ready for the test? Here goes...

1. Have you ever told a lie?

This comes from the 9th commandment, “You shall not lie.” You don’t have to lie habitually to be a liar. Unfortunately, it only requires one. What would you call me if I lied to you?

(J- Man, I am certainly guilty of this one a thousand times over)

2. Have you ever taken something that didn’t belong to you?

The value of the object doesn’t matter. The 8th commandment says, “You shall not steal.” Taking something, anything, that belongs to someone else makes us a thief.

(J- yep, I’ve done that)

3. Have you ever used the Lord’s name in vain?

Basically, this is taking God’s name and instead of using it to give Him honor, we use it to express disgust and rake it through the mud of dishonorable language. The 3rd commandment goes, “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” This makes us a blasphemer.

(J- this one is pretty severe and yet I have done it)

4. Have you ever had an impure sexual thought about someone?

Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, [7th commandment] ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his

heart." This applies to men and women. If you lust, God sees the heart and considers that to be the same as adultery (which is simply sex outside of marriage, whether before or during).

(J- this one gets a lot of guys, me too. If you have red blood in your veins and you were once a teenager...)

Last one, this one is tough...

5. Have you ever hated anyone or furiously called someone a fool or idiot?

The 6th commandment says, "You shall not murder." Jesus warned, "Whoever is angry with his brother without cause, is in danger of judgment... But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." (Matthew 5:22). "He who hates his brother is a murderer," (1 John 3:15).

(J- Yowza! Have you ever driven on 400 in rush-hour? Not so pretty)

So how'd you do? If you are like me, and everyone else on the planet, and if you were honest, you most likely have failed all 5 of these in one way or another. And there are 5 more we didn't even look at with their cannons pointed right at us!

So now comes the bad news. Staying honest with this, by your own admission you are a liar, a thief, a blasphemer, an adulterer and murderer at heart, and you have to stand before God one day in judgment. How do you think you will do on that day? Do you think He will find you innocent or guilty of breaking His laws?

Again, if you are anything like me, He will find you guilty.

And if you are found guilty, should you go to Heaven or Hell?

If you were to answer honestly, you should go to Hell. All of us should go to Hell.

Who of any one of us can say we are not guilty of breaking even all 10 of the Commandments? (You can read the rest in Exodus 20:3-17) This is what the Bible means when it says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23). None of us can measure up to the standard of God's righteousness. You are guilty of sinning (breaking His laws) against God Himself, and, because you have a conscience, (con-with, science-knowledge) you have sinned "with knowledge." Isn't it true that every time you lied, stole, lusted, etc., that you knew it was wrong? I knew it every time.

Some more bad news though. You have actually angered God by your sin and are made an "enemy of God in your mind through your wicked works," (Colossians 1:21) This news scared me. If God is all powerful and was able to create the entire universe out of nothing, I know I certainly didn't want to be His enemy.

But wait, and this was my argument, what about my good things? I thought God was good and loving, Couldn't He, in His goodness, forgive or overlook sins? After all, I have done some good, right?

"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags..." (Isaiah 64:6) Basically, our "good" deeds are like used toilet-paper compared to God's Holiness and Purity. He is so infinitely pure and righteous that we really can't compare. Consider this:

Could a good judge let criminals and lawbreakers just go free without paying for their crimes? If you knew of a human judge who turned a blind eye to the crimes of a guilty rapist... would you describe him as a "good" judge?

No... That would be a corrupt judge. And see, God could never be a corrupt judge.

Or it would be like a criminal saying, "But Judge, I only killed and

raped this one time. Most of the time I'm a nice guy. Don't you think that counts for something?" A good judge would say, "You should be nice, but that doesn't change the facts of your guilt as a criminal. I will not let criminals go free."

God's goodness demands that He be totally just and sees justice done. He will punish ALL the rapists, murderers, thieves... But He won't and can't stop there. He will also punish ALL liars, the lustful adulterers (gulp), idolaters, and blasphemers, (Revelation 21:8). And the place of punishment is the eternal lake of fire, or Hell.

I know this may be hard to swallow, and seems harsh. But it is a harsh reality. So I must ask, please don't read any further until you answer this question honestly, take your time to think about it: Your conscience tells you you are guilty and the consequence of your sins is eternal punishment, does it concern you that if you died in your sins you should go to Hell?

Absolutely it should. It does me. It horrifies me. And I am horrified for you! This is a very serious matter and takes some very serious consideration. If you were to die in the guilt of your sins, you should go to Hell. But... is there a way out of this? If it is true that we are all sinners and we should all go to Hell, then who exactly goes to Heaven? Do you know of anything that God may have done to remedy this situation?

God does not want you, or anyone, to perish. He is rich in mercy and compassion, and has provided a way for you to be forgiven. He has invited you to come to Him for a FULL PARDON and receive the free gift of Eternal Life. You cannot earn it, and you don't deserve it, but God is offering it to you as proof of His love for you.

Are you ready for the good news?

Let's go back to the courtroom for a moment:

You are standing in front of a judge, guilty of multiple serious crimes. All the evidence has been presented and there is no doubt of your guilt. Your apologies and good works cannot erase your crimes; therefore, you must be punished. The fine for your crimes is \$500,000 or imprisonment, but you don't have a dime to your name. The judge is about to pass sentence when someone you don't even know steps in and shouts, "Wait, your Honor! In love for this person, I would like to pay the fine." So he writes a check for the full \$500,000 and reaches across the railing to hand you the check. You are standing there looking at his outstretched hand holding the offered payment, what are going to do?

Take it! Receive the payment! Why not? So you take the check, hand it to the judge and he sees that the check is good. The court accepts the money and declares that your debt has been paid in full. The gavel comes down as the judge announces, "You are free to go." The law and justice have been satisfied, all because of a stranger's sacrificial demonstration of love for you. And now it begs the question, how would you respond to that person?

You would feel like you owed Him your life, right? I know I would. And see, that's what God did for you 2000 years ago.

The Bible says that the God of the Universe became a man (Jesus Christ), and suffered and died on the cross for your sins and mine so that we could be set free. It's as simple as this:

We broke the Law... but Jesus paid our fine.

The Bible tells us there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood. (Hebrews 9:22) And so Jesus shed His for us on the cross...

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

“God demonstrated His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us.” (Galatians 3:13)

Do you understand God’s great love for you? Can you see your need for His forgiveness?

So how does one get this forgiveness? How can we receive the pardon?

Forgiveness comes through repentance. You must do what He commands and “Repent... so that your sins may be wiped out and times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” (Acts 3:19) You must “repent... for the remission [or forgiveness] of sins...” (Acts 2:38)

Repentance. What is it? Some say it is asking for forgiveness and trying to never do bad things again. Others describe it as making a 180 degree turn. The Bible says that people “should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.” (Acts 26:20)

C. S Lewis, author of the “Chronicles of Narnia,” described repentance something like this:

You are a soldier of the rebel army. You are marching up a hill, weapon in hand, ready to face the enemy who is headed in your direction. But you notice that the closer you get to the enemy, the bigger and bigger he appears to be, and his weapons are much more powerful than your own. You ready your tiny gun, but start to shiver with fear. Now is the time, fight or flee? If you fight, you know you won’t survive. If you run, you won’t be fast enough to outreach his cannons. What will you do? Fight, flee, or... fall?

Quickly, you fall to your knees, drop your weapons, hold up your hands and surrender. The enemy rushes forward, but instead of

attacking, he embraces you, and stands you up. He then says, "Rebel, your surrender is made complete and full pardon will be given, if you would turn and march with me. Because a way has been made so that I will have mercy on all those who completely surrender and march in the lines of my army."

And so you do. You change sides, are given a new uniform and new weapons. Your life has been spared and you gladly march in the way of your new commander.

We all are of the rebellion, sinners marching against the righteousness of God. But when we come face to face with God and the cannons of His Commandments we are presented with a choice, to fight, flee, or fall. Many fight outright and eventually lose, because God is too powerful and His Law is insurmountable. If you run from Him, you too will lose, since there is nowhere you can go where he is not. The only option that makes sense then is to fall. Fall at His feet in repentance, crying out for mercy, surrendering wholeheartedly to Him. And He will give you pardon.

You must turn away from sin and turn to God. Desire to have nothing to do with sin, and surrender your life to the One who can save you. Jesus died to set you free, and then He rose from death to be your Lord, proving that we can trust Him. If anyone can raise Himself from the dead, there must be something incredible about Him, and that's the guy I want to follow! No one else has power over death.

Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) If you will confess and forsake your sins (repent) and trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, God will forgive you and you'll pass from death to life.

So what does it mean to "put your faith in Jesus Christ?" It means to personally trust in Jesus the same way you'd trust in a parachute if you had to jump 25,000 feet out of an airplane. You wouldn't just "believe" about the parachute; you would put it on! In the same way, the Bible says, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ..." (Romans 13:14) and

you will be saved. There are millions of people who “believe” Jesus exists... but they have not put on the Savior—there’s a BIG difference. And the difference will be obvious when you “jump” through the door of death. You are to show your full dependence on Him, and not of yourself.

So today, with all your heart—turn away from sin, surrender to and place your faith in Jesus Christ. Please don’t put it off. We know that we certainly don’t know when we will die, and when that comes it will be too late.

Now there is nothing magical about these words, but this is something like what I said when I repented:

“Dear God, today, right now, I surrender to you. I turn from all my sins and confess them to you [name them], and I place my trust in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. Please have mercy on me, a rebellious sinner. Please grant me your gift of everlasting life. Thank you for paying my penalty in full. Thank you for your love. Amen.”

It is the attitude of your heart that God is concerned with. If you are fully surrendered, He will transform you from the inside out. You will think and feel differently as you learn to trust and obey Him. God will give you new strength and desires to live right, love others, and love Him above all else. Read your Bible everyday. Learn about Him. He is trustworthy and loves you.

And so we come full circle. If you could know the outcome of one day of your future would you want to know and what day would that be?

We do know of one day of everyone’s future, “man is destined to die once...” And there is nothing we can do about that.

But we also know of another day of everyone’s future, “...and after that to face judgment.” We can know the outcome of that day.

“Now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30-31)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” (John 3:16-18)

Revelation 20:11-15 tells us what that day of judgment looks like. Please take this chance to read it:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The Book of Life holds the names of all those who have received pardon. If you repent and place your faith in Christ, He knows your name, and you can walk out of the courtroom of God’s justice having your debt paid by Christ’s blood and being declared, “free to go.”

Knowing this, how will it affect what you do between now and then?

