

Set thine house in order - are you ready to die?

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[0:00] It was February 1982 and Julie and I set up our first home together in a double unit, a semi-detached house just over yonder in Elizabeth Park.

! And joined on to our house was another house.! And during the weekend we could hear a lot that was going on.

And I'll call them Julie and Max. Jenny and Max. And Julie and I would hear the drunken brawling and the shouting and the violence through the wall that joined us to our neighbouring house.

Demon drink had got a hold of Max again. And night after night we could hear it. The alcohol-fuelled rages and fighting.

And afterwards we could see Jenny's bruises. And one day we heard that Max had got drunk again. And he had stumbled along and taken one fatal step out onto a main road.

[1:18] He was clipped as the car sped past him. He was killed that night. Run over by a car. He took a step.

And it was his last. The Bible says there is but one step between us and death.

This is a sobering message I pray to reflect on our life and on the reality of death. Your life will end. 2 Kings 20. Turn there. 2 Kings 20. We've got it screaming here. 2 Kings 20 from verse 1. In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death.

And the prophet Isaiah and the son of Amos came to him and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order for thou shalt die and not live.

[2:24] 3 Then he turned his face to the wall and prayed unto the Lord saying, I beseech thee O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart and have done that which is good in thy sight.

4 And Hezekiah wept sore and it came to pass after Isaiah was gone out into the middle court that the word of the Lord came to him saying, Turn again and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears.

5 Behold I will heal thee on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. 6 And I will add unto thy days fifteen years and I will deliver thee in this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria 7 And I will defend this city for mine own sake and for my servant David's sake.

7 And Isaiah said take a lump of figs and they took and laid it on the boil and he recovered. 7 The prophet Isaiah came to visit the king Hezekiah and told him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order, 7 And no less time.

7 You are going to die. 7 Maybe turn me down Kingema. 7 You're going to die. 7 Maybe turn me down Kingema. 7 You're going to die. 7 Set thine house in order was the message. 8 In case you didn't realise it, 9 Life is finite on this earth.

[4:01] 9 The clock of life is wound but once. 9 And no less time. 9 The clock of life is wound but once. but once and no man has the power to tell just when the hands will stop at late or early hour.

To lose one's wealth is sad indeed. To lose one's health is more. To lose one's soul is such a loss that no man can restore. How we need to hear this message in time and get ready, get ready. You are going to die. Get your house in order. That was the message Edmund shared with his brother. Refused sadly. Hezekiah's number was up and he wasn't ready to go. Hezekiah, this king of Judah, one of the best kings, was in this fortress city of Jerusalem and at this time, just a few miles away, the Assyrian army was creating havoc. It was the most powerful military force of its time and it was ravaging the land, destroying, taking over cities. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers were just two or three days marched away and day after day, Hezekiah was getting report after report. Another city burnt, another city broken. No one was able to stand before the mighty, brutal Assyrian army. And

here in Jerusalem, the people were fearful. They were quaking in their boots. They were feeling defeated.

These were indeed desperate, fearful times. Hezekiah. Hezekiah held fast his faith in the true God. He will save us, he told his people. Hezekiah, again, he was a good king. He withstood the idol worship of his day. He got rid of the Baal worship in the land. He was one of Judah's righteous and just kings. And most of the twelve kings before him did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They had brought ruin and shame and apostasy from God to Judah. But of Hezekiah it was said, 2 Kings 18 from verse 4, what Hezekiah did, he removed the high places, the places of worship to these pagan gods. He broke the images. He cut down the groves. He broke in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made. For unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it. And he called it Nehushtan. You know, it gets me when you hear of these places where they've got bones and relics and so-called pieces of the cross. And they go and bow down and worship them. Even if it was the real cross, we're not to worship it. We're not to worship such things. We're not to worship statues or images or pictures or icons or have such things as this. Even if it was the real crown of thorns. Even if it was the real nails. Even if it was the real bones of a certain dead prophet. We're not to have anything to do with such things. So even though this was the brazen serpent that Moses lifted up, that God used for his glory, Hezekiah broke it in pieces. He destroyed it. Verse 5, he trusted the Lord God of Israel so that after him was none like him among the kings of Judah. All the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. So Hezekiah, he was a righteous ruler. He trusted in the Lord. He held fast and followed after him. And the Lord gave him great victory. And he withstood the idol worship of the day. He pulled down those high places. He smashed the pagan idols. And Moses' bronze snake, that was an object of worship, he destroyed it. Hezekiah was a man of

God. He opened up the temple that had been closed down by his father. He restored the worship and God sent revival. So Isaiah came and told Hezekiah now, time's up Hezekiah, you're going to die. You're going to die.

[8:28] What did Hezekiah do? He turned to the wall. He just wanted no distraction. He turned to the wall and he prayed unto the Lord. He got down to business with God. And he asked the Lord for more time. Hezekiah was a righteous man. He prayed fervently. And the word says when we pray fervently, if we're a righteous one, that God will listen. And so God responded to Hezekiah's prayer. The Lord healed him and gave him 15 more years of life. God had made a way where there seemed no other way. Imagine if you were there that day, that time, in Hezekiah's shoes. If you were standing there in Hezekiah's sandals, if you like, and you were told you're about to die. It's time to get your house in order. What does it feel like when you're told such a thing? What if you were told you've suddenly got a journey to make? You've got limited notice. We've booked you in. Here's your tickets. You're flying this afternoon. You've got limited notice to scatter your things together and put them in a bag. I know we're not. I've got a trip to go. Sometimes I just rip it out the drawers and throw it in a big bundle, a big messy pile. But Julie wants to get all the socks and all the various items all laid out just neatly and tidily, perfectly arranged and in perfect order. But what if you had limited time? The plane's leaving in just a couple of hours. You've got to get it all together and get this journey. Get on this journey. You've got to quickly arrange all your things at home so you've got the pets sorted and everything else that, all your affairs of life that you're leaving behind as you quickly pack your bags. Well, for this trip, there's no return ticket. Wow. And you can't take any baggage with you. And chances are you're not going to get much notice of this journey. Are you ready for this journey? We will all make this journey. Are you ready to step into eternity?

See, if you had been Hezekiah hearing this, what would you do? How is your house? What would you want to get right before you go?

What if you were told you've an untreatable condition and your days on earth are about to end? Would you need to set your house in order? Would there be some spiritual changes you'd want to make?

What would you want to tidy up? What would need sorting out? So there wasn't any loose ends you're going to leave behind, as it were.

Maybe there's some things in your life and relationships. What needs sorting out before you meet your maker? What's your question? These are important questions. The prophet told him, you are going to die.

[11:50] But Hezekiah wasn't ready to go. He still had some things that he wanted to do for the Lord. How about you? About us? Is our house in order? Most importantly of all, are you saved? We have no guarantee of tomorrow.

Tomorrow. The word tells us don't boast about tomorrow. We've only got today. And as David said in part 1 Samuel 20 verse 3, but truly as the Lord liveth, truly as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.

It was just one step. It was just one step that Max made onto that busy road. And he was gone. He was gone. One step. Just a step between us and death.

One heartbeat. One breath. And then we are gone. One breath. And then we are going to die.

He was all set for a comfortable life. Yet he made the mistake of not being ready in his soul. And our Lord tells how he boasted to himself.

[13:41] We read there in Luke 12. And I'll say to my soul, soul, thou hast much good to mate up for many years. Take thine ease. Eat, drink and be merry. take it easy, she'll be right mate.

That's the Aussie version. Verse 20, but God said unto me, thou fool, this night thy soul is required of thee. And then who shall those things be which thou hast provided?

You're going to leave it all behind. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. You know, archaeologists have dug through cemeteries of old in Greece and Rome and on some tombs they found this description written on these tombstones in Greek or Latin.

The inscription says, no hope. Imagine having that on your gravestone. No hope. That's what they had on their gravestone.

Imagine living an entire life with no hope. No hope at the end of it. Imagine going into death, dark night, to that eternal light with no hope.

[14:55] No hope for your soul. What a fool we would be. What a fool it would be who would do such a thing to not prepare their soul for this inevitable journey.

Inevitable journey that we will all make and we should all make ready for. Amen. Sure enough, all of us will take this journey and there's only two destinations. Two destinations.

There's a fork in the road after life. One way or the other. The narrow road that leads to life, the broad road that leads to destruction. Friends, we need to choose wisely.

Have you made your reservation? The Bible speaks about a reservation, as it were.

And so, for all of us, there's this decision, there's these destinations to only. And so what will be your new location? I know sometimes at funerals, I've heard someone say that they've had a change of address.

[15:56] Yes. Now, at a funeral, really, there's a change of address. Isn't there? It's one or the other.

And when you move from this earthly house, your body will be in the grave, but your soul will be in a new location. There was a bank in New York that arranged for a florist to send some flowers to a competitor bank that had recently moved to a new building.

They wanted to send some flowers and celebrate their new location, the new building that the bank had moved to. But there was a mix-up at the flower shop.

And the card sent with the arrangement read, With our deepest sympathy. It wasn't very nice, was it? But the florist was greatly embarrassed and she apologised for this, but she was even more embarrassed when she realised that the card that was intended for the bank was attached to a floral arrangement sent to the funeral home in honour of a deceased person.

And this card read, Congratulations on your new location. Congratulations on your new location. Now that might be something to get glad about if we know it's in this direction.

[17:23] Amen. But congratulations on your new location would be such an appropriate message if you're going in the other location. So where will your new location be?

Set thine house in order. That's an important question. So friends, life is short. Life is short. Sermons are long, but life is short. And our lives are just a vapour, just a vapour, I put to you the first order of business is for us, set your house in order is firstly, be sure that you are soundly saved. Make sure that you call on the name of the Lord. Now, I don't have to sprinkle holy water on you or blow holy smoke over you or utter some peculiar words over you, but you need to call on the name of the Lord.

And if you do what the Bible says to do, you can be saved. Make sure your trust is in His work on the cross, dying for your sins, rising again, the saving grace of God demonstrated at the cross in paying the penalty of death for our sin.

Paying it all. Make sure that you're saved, number one. And for we that are saved, is there unfinished business? I'm sure there is.

[18:44] I'm sure if we thought, wow, I've only got a day, a few days, a week, a month. If we knew how much time we had while we're wearing a watch on our living hand, that we would know, yes, there is unfinished business in my life.

If you knew you were going to die, how would you spend that time, that precious time? You'd value it, wouldn't you? You'd value it. You wouldn't take it for granted.

You want to spend it wisely. Friends, I've put to you, death is impartial. It doesn't matter your character, your age, your fitness level, your hopes, just a step.

Max was a pretty fit, strong man, a drunk man, a dead man. But a step. You are going to die. If you have more time, how would you spend it?

When the time comes, you can't delay it. Hezekiah got an unusual extension of his life. It was an unusual, exceptional case. There's an Arab proverb that says this, the black camel stops at every man's door.

[19:56] The camel of death stops at every man's tent, if you like. And to us in due time will be brought that message, that glad message, the Master is come and is calling for you.

One day we're going to hear that glad message when we know him. And so let us hear our Lord. He says, Set your house in order for you shall die and not live. It is appointed unto men once to die.

After that, the judgment. One chance, one life. The summoner's prayed, Lord, make me to know my end and the measure of my days what it is that I may know how frail I am.

Help me to measure my days. The word tells us to count our days and make sure that they count. So let us solemnly consider the shortness of life and the certainty of death.

This is not to scare you, to make it sound morbid or unpleasant or uncomfortable for you. But it is a reality, isn't it? It's a reality that our heart will one day stop beating, our breath will stop breathing.

[21:07] We need to get ready for death. It's certain and it is sore. History tells us of a man called Peter Waldo of Lyons.

Peter Waldo, one day he was sitting in a big banquet. Everyone was carrying on and laughing and joking and there was a lot of banter and revelry and there was a lot of thoughtless and careless people sitting around this banquet table and Peter Waldo was having a ball of a time.

It was a party time and there was much merrymaking going on and suddenly one of the people at the table, he might have just had a drink or something to eat and suddenly he just bowed his head and he died.

In the middle of this wonderful joyful party time somebody died and what a shocking surprise it was to Peter and Peter Waldo he was rocked by this.

It rocked him and he went home to search for God and he searched the scriptures and he sought after God. He knew that the reality of death had stared him full bore in the face and he found peace for his soul as he trusted Christ.

[22:19] He trusted the saving grace of God and Walter, Peter Waldo became a man who trusted in the Lord. He was used of God as he gathered with

faithful believers across the Alpine valleys of Europe in what was otherwise a very dark and godless and dreadful spiritual darkness of that time and Waldo held fast the word of God with faithful believers.

The remnant church of that day was strengthened and blessed because of the dread sobering effects on Waldo's mind of the death of a man at a party.

It's just a step between life and death. It's just a step and it can happen suddenly, unexpectedly. Precious souls depart from us with little notice, little warning. I think of loved ones that I have known in these 17 odd years I've been pastoring this church. People who have worshipped with us whether in this place or in previous gathering places and some of them have presided at their funerals.

Some of you would know these names. Some of you would remember these people. People like Brett, Ken, Abigail, George and Ruby, Joyce, Brian, Marjorie, George, Muriel, Alex, Bill, Ralph, Cliff. [23:44] They've gone. They're no longer here. They've gone. People we have known and loved. You could think of many of your own friends and family.

People that have identified with this church are now, I trust, gathering with the Saviour above. People whose lives we have touched as a church. And so too, let us love the people we have in our lives today.

Let us love the people that we have in our lives today while they're still living and breathing. Let us love them. Let us realise we don't know how long they are with us.

Thus saith the Lord, set thine house in order for thou shalt die and not live. I pray this is a wake up call for all of us to consider that temporary nature of life and of the reality of death.

To consider how close death is and to make preparation. How much time have we got? You know, there's a funny story of a doctor who came to a patient and he said, I've bad news for you and worse news.

[25:01] So the patient said, so let's have it. Doctor said this, the bad news is that you only have 24 hours to live.

The patient says, I can't imagine what could be worse than that. I forgot to tell you yesterday. We don't know how long we've got. We don't know how long we've got.

The doctor might think you've got a certain amount of time. You know, I know people have been given certain amounts of time that they've got to live and they've surprised everyone and they've gone much longer. But the converse is true too.

Sometimes we think we've got six months, a year or two to live and no, the doctor got it wrong. And of course for us who believe death is not something to be afraid of.

There was a few days before his death, a man called Mayer, a preacher called Dr. Mayer, he wrote to a very dear friend these words, Dr.

[26:11] Mayer knew that he was going to meet this fellow believer in the morning, so to speak, at that time where they would be reunited. Mayer knew where he was going and he was ready.

And he had time to write to people, to express his love with those that he cared about. We don't always get time to do that, do we? We don't always get time to sort things out with people.

Wouldn't it be good to do that while we can? Maybe there's someone you might like to write a letter to or say something to, make a call, pay a visit.

For the believer, death is truly a glad day. It's a coronation day where we look forward to it with joy. Psalms 116 it says, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

Friends, the fact is that none of us know how much time we have. We're not guaranteed tomorrow and we don't know if God will extend the time for us as Hezekiah had another 15 years.

[27:18] Today is all that we have. What will we leave behind? Set your house in order. Someone has said this, God buries his workmen but not his work.

You know, leave something for God. Leave a legacy for God. Amen. I'd like to think there'll be something left for a life lived.

And King Hezekiah was remembered as a righteous king. Men and women of God have touched lives and they've made their mark and so can you today. I'm encouraging you here today. You know, as a church we like everybody to play a part and that's why as much as it might make our

services go a bit longer sometimes, it's good to have people participating and joining in. You know, I've seen some churches where the pastor opens in prayer, he leads the songs, he prays again, he preaches, he prays again, he song leads and then he closes in prayer. And no one else did anything else. There wasn't even a musician at particular occasion. Now I'm not condemning that pastor, different churches do things differently. But I'd like to think that we can encourage one another.

[28:30] That even as scary as it is to pray in public for the first time, that even to be an usher, to be one praying, to be one caring and reaching out and showing hospitality and using your gifts and ministries and callings and giving a testimony that you can not be afraid to join in and speak out.

What will you do with your life? What will your legacy be? What are the things that we need to set in order for that day, that certain day, are we ready for that certain day, the day of our death?

Or for when our Lord may take us to himself. Are you ready? This is the question I put to you. First, are you saved? Are you sure that you're saved?

Have you trusted him? Not your works, not anything of you? All of him, all of his grace, all of his cross, all of his love, all of his tender mercies, all of his undeserved compassions.

Be sure to be saved. And secondly, how is your spiritual life? How is it with you? You know, I've asked someone, how are you going spiritually? And they got offended with me.

[29:39] Look, that's a fair question to ask, honestly. How are you going spiritually? How are you going spiritually? Could it be that some unresolved things?

Set your house in order. Be rich towards God. Invest your life in doing his will. Set your house in order. Get serious about your soul, about your spiritual life.

How would you rate your fear of God today? from zero to 100%. What's the scale? Your fear of God. Do you scarcely pay attention?

Maybe it's at zero. I think about God 10 o'clock Sunday morning if I remember. No. Your fear of God.

We should walk in the fear of God. We should consider the fear of God. And not that God is little thought of, but that he is often thought of. He's always in our thoughts. Is there a need to confess sin to God?

[30:43] If you're really conscious of the fear of God, it makes us conscious of our sin. Is there a need to confess sin to God? You don't have to go into some little closet place and talk to a man.

You can talk to the man. The God man. The one mediator between God and man. The Lord Jesus Christ. You can confess your sin to God and you can receive his pardon instantly.

No Hail Marys. No nothing. Just grace. And are you one who comes under the influence of spirits or drink? Yet you know not what it is to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Ask yourself these questions. How long will you hold back from surrendering to God? What will it take to move you? when was the last time God was truly at work in your soul?

James 4 it says verse 14 whereas you know not what you'll be on the morrow for what is your life? It is even a vapour. Just a bit of vapour like a wind that appears for a time and then it vanishes away.

[31:56] Is there someone you need to witness to that God has been putting on your heart but you've yet to say anything? Set your house in order.

Set your house in order. You've yet to say a word to them. God wants you to speak while you've got lips to speak while you've got a tongue in your mouth that moves and can say words.

Is there someone you want to tell and show your love to? Don't leave it too late. What are you doing with your life? When was the last time you truly met with God?

As one preacher prayed, put a holy dissatisfaction in us tonight. He prayed for a holy dissatisfaction. We shouldn't get satisfied with a smug complacent Christianity.

An armchair glory train ride Christianity. Just sit back and enjoy the ride. Let's get dissatisfied with that cosy token Christianity.

[33:01] Let's pull out all the stops. No more half measures. Set your house in order. May you determine today, I am going to set my house in order.

I'm going to be the man of God, the woman of God in my home. I'm going to do the will of God in my life. stop shirking and get going for God.

May you determine today. I'm not going to let up or slow up or slow down. I'm going to decide now to seek earnestly, seek earnestly after God.

To be filled and filled and filled again with the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit of God. Is there anything you need to make right? I pray on God speaking through this vessel to you.

As the word of God says, set your house in order. Is there someone you want to bless that you've not got around to yet? Is there a phone call you need to make, a letter you need to write?

[34:08] Is there a wrong you need to make right? Is there a hurt you need to heal? Is there a strife you need to fix? Is there a forgiveness you need to give?

A debt you need to pay? Is there an offence you have caused and you need to get it right? Is there a humble pie that we need to eat? You might have to say sorry when you're not really at fault.

An apology you need to give. Is there a spiritual gift you need to exercise and dust off the shelf? A ministry you need to launch into?

Is there a spiritual calling that you've neglected and you need to surrender to God? Is there something you're holding back from God that you need to yield to him?

to yield to his call on your life? Is there a sin you need to repent of? Pride, bitterness, greed?

[35:09] Do you need to work at a closer walk with the Lord? I'm sure really we could all say yes to all these things. Me in particular. I'm not pointing at you, I'm pointing at me.

How is your house? How is your house today? Your family? Set your house in order to sense where's the household? The family? Are you raising up your children to know the Lord?

I've got many regrets as a parent. Many, many regrets. Are you raising up your children in righteousness? Or are you allowing the devil to shape their minds through wickedness over TV or whatever?

Is your house in order? Friends, let's take stop today. I'm coming to a close. Have you wrestled with God for your life? Let's get serious. Have we offended the holiness of God?

Will we get serious about our profession of Christianity? Or will we settle for the lukewarm and the Laodicean? Are we laying up treasure in heaven? Or do we put more into McDonald's?

[36:21] Laying treasure in heaven? Where are you spiritually? Let us ask ourselves honestly these things. There is but a step, just a step, between us and death.

Max found that out. And he didn't know the Lord. He had no warning. He was gone in an instant. His soul was lost forever.

As far as I know, he did not know God. Life is short. Short. There is no guarantee that everyone who has gathered here today will be here next week.

You will be in your new location. Your new location. And for some it will be glory. Glory. Can we shout that? Glory. Because it will be that new location.

It will be heaven. heaven. But for some. I stand at the grave side. I stand in the place of presiding over a funeral. And I can only hope and pray that they uttered the name of Jesus with their lips before it was too late.

[37:32] That they called on his name. Life is short. When was the last time we were a witness for Christ? How long have we got left to sit around and play with worldliness and carnal living?

Have we entered into the fullness? What's stopping us? What's stopping you? What's stopping you? When will we get it sorted? Get it sorted. Will we get a fresh revelation of who God is and what it is that he wants us to do?

I urge you, I challenge you respectfully, beseeching you, pleading with you as Christ, I pray, is beseeching through me, in me, to you.

Let us determine to live as would be pleasing to the Lord. With those moments, with those precious minutes and hours and days of our lives that are yet to come, it is still time to seek the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord, set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live. Lord, we pray as we close now.

[38:42] Help us, Lord, to be mindful that life is a vapour and there's but a step between us and death. Help us, Lord, to be mindful to set our house in order.

Lord, let us make preparation now on this earth for those loved ones, those ones we need to talk with, the ones we need to reach out to, to sort things with people, to sort things with you, to get on track spiritually, to get fired up.

help us, Lord, to be used of you, for your sake, for your praise, for your glory. We pray if there's any here present, that they're yet to know for sure that heaven will be their new location, that they'll call on you, Lord, and say, Jesus, Lord God, Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for my sin, for paying the price for it there, rising from the dead to be my living saviour now, as I trust in you.

While we pray for each Christian, each believer here today, help us to count our days, to count our days and to use them with wisdom, Lord, knowing that we have only a finite resource of available time.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.