

# If I Should Die Before I Live

by Russell DeLong

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a spiritually fulfilling life rather than merely existing at a biological level.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:27, John 10:10, Romans 6:19, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Galatians 2:20

**Topics:** "Spiritual Living", "Moral Responsibility"

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## Description

Russell DeLong preaches about the importance of truly living as a soul created in God's image, emphasizing the distinction between mere existence and spiritual and moral living. He highlights the tragedy of living like an animal, consumed by physical needs and pleasures, rather than embracing the abundant life offered by Christ. DeLong urges listeners to reflect on whether they are existing like animals or living as children of God, challenging them to surrender to Christ and begin to truly live.

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## Transcript

Scripture: Romans 6:19-23

Most of us are tenderly familiar with the child's bedtime prayer taught to us by our mothers:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,

I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

If I should die before I wake,

I pray the Lord my soul to take."

For my sermon today I am lifting out that third line and changing the last word from "wake" to "live" to read, "If I should die before I live." Sounds like a paradox, doesn't it? How can a man die before he lives? Well, it all depends on how you define the word "live."

A cow or a sheep or a hog lives. In contrast to a stone or a mountain or a coal mine,

animals live -- they are animate. The other objects are inanimate. They have no powers of

locomotion. They are static, unmoved, set.

The word "animal" comes from the same root as "animate." It moves, eats, drinks, sleeps.

In brief, it lives biologically.

A man also moves, eats, drinks, sleeps -- lives biologically.

In nature there is a mineral, a vegetable, and an animal kingdom. Each exists. Man physically and biologically belongs to the animal kingdom.

But he is more than an animal. He is a living, breathing, pulsating soul. His body is made

from the dust of the earth but his soul is the breath of God. The account reads, "God created man in his own image" (Gen. 1: 27).

After creating the heavens and the earth, the sun and moon and stars, the mineral kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, the animal kingdom, God climaxed His creative genius by making man in His own image. Here is the procedure as recorded in God's Holy Word, the Bible: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Man has a unique existence. He is more than an animal. He is more than a biological,

physical organism. He is a living soul. He has a body which needs food and liquid and sleep as all animals do. He exists physically but he is more -- he is a spirit inhabiting a body.

When a man lives like an animal, just eats and drinks and sleeps, he has stooped from the

high levels of moral and spiritual living to the low plane of mere physical existing; and this is the number one tragedy. For a man created in God's own likeness to wallow in the quagmires of sensual, animal, physical cesspools is pathetic.

A child in its first years is concerned almost entirely with physical needs. Its body must be fed and protected. Later the mind begins to function and think. To remain in the animal stage and spend all of one's time in satiating thirst and satisfying hunger, ultimately leading to drunkenness and gluttony, is a horrible prostitution of God's crowning creation. Never to reach the levels of moral achievement or scale the heights of spiritual enrichment is the supreme travesty.

That is the import of my sermon subject -- to die before one lives. Merely to exist, like an animal, and never to live, like an immortal soul, is tragic.

One of our great magazines carried a soul-moving story of the war recently. The writer

was a soldier. He recounted the experiences of his outfit and gave a graphic description of one of his fellow soldiers. He was a low character -- had a foul tongue mouthing the most blood-curdling profanities and boasting of the vilest, unclean escapades. Whenever on leave he became drunk and frequented the lowest dives. He gambled and cursed and drank and caroused. He finally died in one of his drunken brawls. The author of the article in commenting on his death wrote this striking, sobering sentence: "I'm not sorry he died; I'm sorry he never began to live."

George Bernard Shaw advocated that every five years every man should be arrested and

put on trial. When asked, "Why?" he replied, "To decide whether it is justifiable for both society and himself that the person on trial should live longer."

If a man is not producing anything, if he is not creating value, if he is merely a parasite consuming and destroying, why should he live longer?

If a person has already descended to animal levels, if society is no better (probably worse), if his family is not uplifted (probably embarrassed), if he has ignored his soul and forgotten the blessings of God, if he is a thankless ingrate, a profligate prodigal, a human animal, what claim does he have to continue to exist? And if he has squandered this mortal life why should he merit immortality?

No man can really live without Christ. He came to bring life and life more abundantly. He sets goals, posits worthy objectives, and gives worth-while ideals. In addition Jesus makes available a power that one may not become a victim on the animal level but that he may become a victor on the God-inspired spiritual heights. In brief, that one may live, not merely exist.

Of course the personal import of this sermon is: Are you existing like an animal or living like a son of God?

Clarence Edwin Flynn wrote:

To be a slave when one might be a king,  
To walk low roads when one might walk the high,  
To crawl when one might just as well take wings,  
To take the slime when one might have the sky;  
To mingle with those whose lives are cheap  
When with the sons of God we might commune,  
To have the shallow rather than the deep,  
To choose the discord, rather than the tune,  
To dwell in swamps when one might have the heights,  
To have a hovel for a heart and miss the golden dome  
Where we might dwell in light --  
Is there a greater tragedy than this?"

If you should die before you live may God have mercy on your wasted life and ruined soul.

Why don't you surrender yourself to Christ and begin to live?

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