

## **“You will not surely die”**

This is what Satan said to Eve when he tempted her to eat the fruit from the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden, which was the exact opposite of what God told Adam in Genesis 2:16-17: *“And the LORD God commanded the man, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”*

Pastor Keith referred to these scriptures in a recent message, and when I heard him say the words (my paraphrase) “surely you won’t die,” it just jumped out at me and stuck in my spirit. I immediately thought back to when I smoked years ago, there were numerous warnings (in the 60’s and 70’s) about how cigarettes can cause cancer, but that didn’t deter me, because they didn’t GUARANTEE they would kill you, they just informed you they could.

This was how I rationalized my smoking habit - surely the odds were high that I would escape the dreaded “C” word. According to current statistics, there are approximately 29 million cigarette smokers in America, and there are approximately 140,000 deaths from lung cancer each year. If you’re a smoker, that’s pretty good odds, unless you happen to be one of the unlucky 140K people who succumb to it, or are one of the millions who deal with COPD and other ill effects of smoking.

Throughout the years, when anyone talked to me about Christianity, I had the same “stick my head in the sand” thought that I would somehow be OK - I never really thought much about Heaven or Hell - life was too much fun without mixing Christianity in as well. If that’s how you feel, I have some bad news for you...

Because Adam and Eve (who represented all of humanity who came afterwards) sinned, we are ALL sinners. Here’s what Romans 5:12 says: *“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned..”* Without Jesus Christ as your Savior, there is a written GUARANTEE that you WILL DIE as a sinner, and be destined for hell! But if that’s you, I have some good news for you...

Romans 6:23 says: *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* In John 3:3 Jesus told Nicodemus: *“I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”* We are created as eternal beings, and we will all live for eternity somewhere, and the choice is ours. We can deny the truth until our dying day and send ourselves to hell, or we can embrace the truth and be GUARANTEED a spot in heaven!

There is no benefit in going to hell - whatever enjoyment you have in life is as good as it gets, but the second you surrender to Jesus Christ, your “benefit plan” begins, and the benefits are amazing! Choose wisely my friends! Amen!