

Russian Roulette



By Pastor Jack Hyles



"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." -Hebrews 9:27

Russian Roulette is a game played with a pistol and one bullet. A gun is taken, pointed at the head, and the trigger is pulled, knowing not if the bullet is in that particular cylinder. You have one chance in six to die; five in six to live.

It was reported recently in a local newspaper of a young man being killed while playing such a game.

Such folly is unbelievable. Yet, there is a spiritual Russian Roulette played by many that is more dangerous, more tragic, more condemning, and more deadly than any kind of Russian Roulette played with a man-made weapon. There are three dates set in your life. You must face these dates whether you like it or not. You have to face these dates. They could take place any day. They could be today; they could be tomorrow; they could be ten years from now. These dates are indelibly set. In God's wisdom He has set them. We know not when they will be. Yet, if any one of these happened to a lost man today, he would be eternally condemned.

I. THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST MAY BE ANY DAY

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doeth come." --Matt.24:42.

Now, suppose that this moment the clouds of Heaven were to break open and the shout, "Come forth!" were to come from the lips of the Saviour. Suppose that today the voice of the archangel were to shout and the trump of God were to ring through Heaven's splendor. Suppose the dead in the grave were suddenly to rise and those who were alive and remain, who were saved, should be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. If that took place today, would you be ready?

There is a date set for His coming. The Bible says the angels know not when; the saints in Heaven do not know; the Father has written down on some heavenly note the date of the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. It may be October 27, 1976. It may be June 1, 1995. It may be September 11, 1961. I do not know when it will be. You do not know. Jesus on earth did not know. The saints in Heaven do not know. The angels do not know. Angelic hosts do not know. Only God knows.

I ask you a question: Could it be today? It may be out yonder in the year 2000, it may be 1980, it may be in 1975, it may be 1962. But, my friend, there is at least one chance, is there not, that it could be today?

Now, if it could be today, the unsaved are playing spiritual Russian Roulette with the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. For there is at least one chance that today might be the last day. There is at least one chance that Jesus might come today. There is at least one chance that you might condemn your soul by saying "No" to Jesus Christ today. It may be June 3, 1987, but it is logical, whenever it is, to be ready for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I recall when I was a boy, I went to hear an evangelist preach who said that Jesus was coming by Christmas. That was 1936. He said, "Jesus is coming by Christmas." I believed it. I thought He was going to come by Christmas, too. I was scared to death. I went home and cried. I said, "Mother, if He does come by Christmas, what will I do?" Mother answered "Son, it all depends on whether you're saved or not."

I got on my knees before Christmas and got converted. I came to Jesus Christ and I know today by my faith in Him and the fact that I have been born again that if Jesus comes today, I will rise to meet Him. If all of a sudden this building were to be made of transcendent splendor and the clouds of Heaven were to open and Jesus Christ the Son of God were to shout and come back in the clouds of glory, I know that I would rise to meet His in the air.

This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise To seize the everlasting prize; And shout, while passing thro' the air, Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer.

A date was set for Noah's generation. By Usher's chronology it was estimated to be May 17, 2448 B. C. Nobody knew when it was. Noah did not know. The people did not know that the day, (possibly May 17, 2448 B. C.) was a date that God had set on His calendar. The people did not know when the destruction would come. Noah did not know the day of the flood. Only God knew. God had placed the date in the heavenly record book of , let us say, May 17, 2448 B. C. When the day came the people tried to get in and tried to get help. Many good people were not prepared. Many people who were sincere were not ready and were destroyed in the flood. Why? Because they played Russian Roulette with the flood.

My precious friend, if I were you today and had not received Christ as my Saviour; if I did not know that if I died today I would go to Heaven; or that if Jesus came today that I would rise to meet Him in the air, I would receive Him now as my Saviour. I would say "Yes" to Christ. I would turn from my sins and turn to Jesus Christ.

I'm trying to say, my precious friends, that Jesus is coming again. I would not play Russian Roulette with my soul and the second coming of Christ. I'm trying to say that the glory of God is going to come from Heaven and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is coming back again. If you are not saved, if you have not become a Christian, you are playing Russian Roulette with your soul. I beg you, in Jesus' dear name, turn to Christ and be saved by faith in Him and be ready to meet Him when He comes in the air.

Thank God, I settled that myself. I settled that matter a long time ago. You can laugh at it, make fun of it, say what you want to say, get on me for hollering and screaming and shouting and crying and laughing and praising God. Say what you want to say. If you got it the way I got it, you'd have it the way I have it, and you'd act like I act too, a little bit. I'm trying to say this, my dear friend: Receive Jesus before Jesus comes, else you will be left when He comes. Do not play Russian Roulette with the coming of Christ.

Years ago in one of my pastorates a new family moved into our neighborhood and started attending our services regularly. The mother was soon saved and baptized. The children, ages 13, 9, and 6, were saved also and baptized. The father would not receive Jesus. One night the man came to church and heard my sermon on "Hell." As he left he snickered and said, "I'm only 39 years old and I'll get saved in my own way."

Two days later, on Tuesday morning, a man rushed into the church building screaming, "Come quickly, Pastor! A man is dying." I rushed down the street to find this lost 39-year-old man lifeless on the bed. His wife was over him administering artificial respiration and crying, "He waited too late, Pastor! He waited too late!"

After the doctor pronounced him dead, I was asked to go to the school and tell the children. I gathered the three around me and told them that Daddy was dead. The six-year-old asked, "Where is Daddy now?" What could I say? What a tragedy when men play Russian Roulette with God.

II. DEATH MAY COME ANY DAY

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die..." (Heb. 9:27).

The second date is the date of your death. All men must die. Lamech lived for 777 years, but he died. Enos lived for 905 years, but he died. Caanan lived 910 years, but he died. Seth lived 912 years, but he died. Jared lived 962 years, but he died. Methuselah lived 969 years, but he died.

You too must die. God in Heaven has written down on His heavenly records the date that you are going to die. I do not know when it will be. You do not know when. You have no idea what the date will be. God may have written down April 18, 1984. I do not know. But one thing I do know: The Bible says it is appointed unto men once to die and after death the judgment. Every man, every woman, every boy, every girl someday must die, and when you die, you must face God. That means that someday you will stand before God. God will look at you and you will look at Him and you will tell Jesus Himself why you did not receive Him as Saviour

You're going to die. There's coming a day when they will pronounce you dead. The doctor will look at your family and say, "He's gone," or "She's gone." The family will come and throw themselves over your

body and weep, "Don't go! Don't go!" There will be the horrible experience of the funeral service. There will be days of readjustment because you are gone, but you are going to die. I do not know what date it will be, but I do know one thing: it is some day. It may be June 5, 2006. I don't know. It may be March 2, 1986. I don't know. But, it could be today. If there is one chance in a thousand you could die today, that means that if you are not saved you are playing Russian Roulette with your soul. It isn't worth it, my dear friend. The Bible says life is like a shadow that is here and gone; like a flower that blooms in the springtime and fades in the fall; like the dew that comes in the morning and is gone by noontime; like the grass that grows green in the early summer and is brown by the fall and winter.

My father did not know that May 13, 1950, was the date that God had set on His calendar. My father was not a Christian. I preached to my father just before he died. He refused to accept the Lord Jesus Christ. Little did I know when I preached to my father that God had written on His calendar in red letters--May 13, 1950. He didn't know that. I didn't know that. If I had known that, I would have begged him to get saved. If I had known it, I would have gotten on my knees and said, "Dad, don't put it off! You have only a few weeks to live. May 13 is your last day. I beg you, Dad, I beg you, don't put it off." But we didn't know that. However, we did know one thing: it could be May 13, 1950. We knew it could have been the day I talked with him. We did not know and I promised God on the grave of my father that I would preach every Sunday as a dying man to dying people and beg people not to put off this matter of salvation.

Dear friend, someday you are going to die. I'm preaching today to mortal people headed for death and plunging toward eternity, and there is a chance it could be today. I beg you, prepare for death.

I'm happy to say today, not because I'm good, or because I deserve it, or because I do more good things than bad things, but I'm happy to say that if I died, I would be in Heaven. If next Sunday I'm preaching and all of a sudden I slump over and Brother Lyons rushes and catches me and Brother Chamblin says "He's dying" and deacons rush to give artificial respiration and they carry me out of the building and say, "Brother Hyles is gone; he's dead," don't weep, but rejoice, because I'll be with the Lord Jesus Christ before you get to my body. I know that. I wouldn't trade all the money in the world for that. I wouldn't take anything in this world for the blessed assurance that if I die this minute, I'd be in Heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I've seen folks die in every conceivable place. I've seen them die in the grocery stores. A man who was to speak in our church one night dropped dead before he spoke. I only met him five minutes before. I do not know when my day is going to be, but it could be today. Today could be the date written on my tombstone. It could be: Jack Hyles--Born 1926; Died--March 15, 1961. It could be that; I don't know. But if I were not ready to meet Christ today, I would be playing spiritual Russian Roulette with my soul.

My dear friends, when are some of you folks going to get saved? When are some of you going to walk the aisle to do what you ought to do? There are some folks who say, "I'm going to, I'm going to," yet you are going to wait one of these days and the angry pangs of death are going to come and wrap their ugly tentacles around you and you will be in Hell without God and without hope. I beg you, quit tampering with God's spiritual calendar.

Several years ago I was giving the invitation after a morning sermon. A couple raised their hands for prayer. Neither of them was aware of the other's action. They shook, cried, perspired, and came close to the kingdom. Nevertheless, they rejected the Gospel appeal. After the service they said that they planned to be saved soon. Before a week had passed, she shot him in bloody murder. A short while later, she was killed in a drunken escapade. If they had only known!

A young man recently heard me preach and rejected the Gospel. After the service I talked with him and warned him of the danger of neglect. He laughed and walked away. That night he was killed in a head-on collision on the highway. If he had only known!

Quit playing Russian Roulette with death.

III. YOUR LAST CHANCE FOR SALVATION MAY PASS

"And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."--Gen. 6:3.

The third date that is set is the date of your last chance of salvation.

There is a time, I know not when, A place, I know not where, Which marks the destiny of men To Heaven or despair.

There is a date on your calendar that marks the last date you will have a chance to get saved. I do not know what it is. Maybe it is April 3, 1965; maybe it's March 25, 1998. I don't know when it is, but it could be May 15, 1961, and this could be the last chance you will ever have at salvation.

The Bible says in Genesis 6:3, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." In Exodus 8:1 it says, "Let Pharaoh alone, he has hardened his heart." In Hosea 4:17 it says, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." In Genesis 15:16 it says, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." In Romans 1:26 it says, "God gave them up." In Romans 1:28 it says, "God gave them over."

God someday gets tired of begging you. Soul winners have been in your homes. Some folks have been in your home four, five, six, and seven times. They have begged you to make a stand for God. They have pleaded for you to come to Christ. They have said, "Please don't put it off." One of these days God in Heaven will draw that line and you will step across it and you will have not one more chance as long as you live.

Aaron Burr was a student in Princeton University. Aaron Burr was in a revival meeting back in the days when Princeton was a hotbed for God. They were having an old-fashioned revival and Aaron Burr was under conviction. God spoke to his heart. He walked out one night beneath the stars and looked up to God and said, "God leave me alone! God did. From that moment to this God left Aaron Burr alone.

You go right ahead and say "No" to Christ. There is a line drawn and those who continually reject Christ someday will cross that line. Someday you will say "No" the last time and God will say, "I've said 'Please '

enough." God will say, "Depart from me into everlasting fire, you workers of iniquity." I beg you, I beg you, don't say "No" to Jesus Christ.

On January 1, 1950, my father sat in my service--about five or six rows back. he was a rough man, a tough-looking man. He used to be a wrestler. I was his preacher boy. On December 31, 1949, I found my father in a tavern. I walked inside that tavern and said, "Dad, you're going home with me this weekend."

Taking my big old Bible that I had preached from for years, I walked up to the bar. The drunks looked at me and wondered what a Bible was doing there. I had never been in a tavern before. I sat down beside my father, put my hand on his shoulder and said, "Dad, you're going to Marshall, Texas, with me today and I'm going to preach to you tomorrow, on January 1, 1950, New Year's Day."

Dad looked at me, shrugged his shoulders and sort of half drunk said, "I'm not going."

I said, "You're going, Dad." (He weighed 235 lbs., was over 6 feet and every inch a man.) I said, "Dad, you weigh almost twice what I weigh, but you're going with me, Dad, if I have to make a scene in this tavern. If I have to drag you bodily, you're going with me."

I took my dad to the car and to Marshall, Texas. On New Year's Eve night we had a Watch Night service, a blessed time. I said to my father, "Dad, are you having a good time?" He looked at me, smiled, and great big tears rolled down his whiskered cheeks, as he said, "Son, they don't have this much fun where I stay."

I took him outside the building and said, "Dad, I'm so happy! I want you to be one of my deacons. I want you to get saved."

Dad began to cry. "Son, I'd love to be one of your deacons."

"Dad, would you receive Christ?"

He didn't receive Christ that night. The next morning I preached to him. He sat about four or five rows back, next to the aisle. An old one-legged deacon, an old country farmer deacon, sat next to him. As I preached, my dad wept. When I got through preaching I just knew he would walk the aisle that day. I gave the invitation; I told everything I knew to tell. I said, "Wouldn't you come to Christ?" He didn't do it.

My old one-legged deacon put his arm around him and my dad reached down and clutched the pew and actually dug his fingernails into the pew as he wept and cried, but didn't come. I closed the service and said, "Tonight he'll come! Tonight he'll come!"

That afternoon we went out in the pasture near the little country church. I put my arm around his big old shoulders and said, "Daddy, I've always wanted you to be a Christian. Dad, I'm a preacher, I'm a pastor; but Dad, you drink, you curse, you are separated from Mother, our home is broken. Wouldn't you receive Christ as your Saviour?"

My dad put his arm on my shoulder (it was almost as big as my body), looked me in the eye and said, "Son, I'm going to do it! I'm going to do it!"

I said, "That's wonderful. That's wonderful. Dad, let's kneel and pray."

"Not now, Son. But I'm going to do it in the spring or early summer. I'm going to Dallas and sell out and I'm going to come to East Texas and buy a little fruitstand or a little grocery store and go into business down here. I'm going to live close enough, Son, to hear you preach every Sunday." Then he said to me for the first time, "Son, I'm proud of you. I want to come back and settle down and I'm going to take you up on that deacon proposition and I'm going to receive Christ and let you baptize me."

That was on January 1, 1950. I lived for the spring and summer. Every time I baptized anyone in that little country baptistery and said, "Buried in the likeness of His death, and raised in the likeness on His resurrection," I pictured myself in the springtime or early summer taking my big old 235-pound dad and lowering him in the water and raising him in newness of life, rejoicing because I had baptized my own dad. I looked forward to the day when I could place my hands on Daddy's head and say, "God bless you, Dad," and have him as a deacon in my church. I longed for it. I lived for it.

On May 13, I had preached a radio sermon at 9 a.m. I finished preaching, went out to the little parsonage in the country and sat down to read the DALLAS MORNING NEWS. The telephone rang. Mrs. Hyles answered. "Rev. Jack Hyles please, long distance calling." I picked up the telephone and a man on the other end of the line said, "This is Mr. Smith. Your dad just dropped dead with a heart attack on the job."

I put my paper down, put my head in my hands and said, "Dear God, it isn't fair! I've been trying to get folks right with God and my own dad is lost and now has died and as far as I know, was unprepared." I wept and prayed as I went to Dallas, Texas, and followed the hearse down to the little cemetery in Italy, Texas, and watched them put my dad's body in the grave. I went back a few days later and got on my knees on the mound under which my daddy's body rested and said, "Dear Lord, You help me and I'll preach every Sunday just like my dad was in the crowd."

I never go to bed on Saturday night without taking the only picture of my dad that I have, looking at it and saying, "Dear Jesus, tomorrow when I preach I want to preach like Dad was in the service."

Oh, if only I had January 1, 1950, to live over again! I wouldn't let him wait until May or June or the spring or summer. I'd say, "Don't wait, Dad."

We didn't know what the date would be, but God had written back there in the ages of eternity, "May 13, 1950."

There is a time, I know not when, A place, I know not where, Which marks the destiny of men To Heaven or despair.

I beg you, my dear friends, I beg you--Jesus may come today; you may die today; you may cross the line today. I beg you, if you don't know that if you died today you would go to Heaven, receive Him now as your Saviour. Then you can say with me that you know that if you died today, you would go to Heaven.

Don't play Russian Roulette with God

