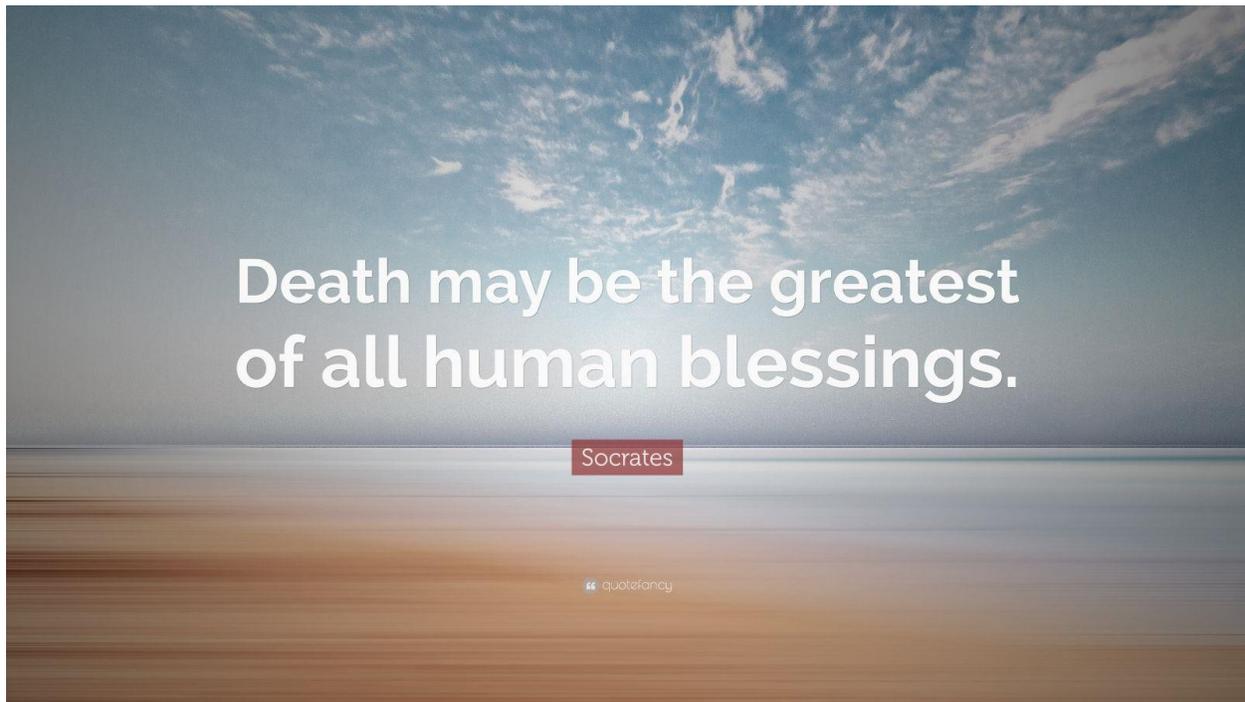


Daily Life with Christ-57. New Year Special 2018 (Part 5): Death as a gift from God--not only is life a precious gift from God, physical death is also a priceless gift from Him.



From both a philosophical and theological viewpoint, there is great value for everyone in the fact of physical death. The only exception would be for the person himself who rejects God's salvation offered in Jesus Christ by faith alone in Christ alone (Πίστευσον ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν χριστόν, καὶ σωθήσῃ, Acts 16:31; also see Eph. 2:8-9; Jn. 3:16).

It is an undeniable fact that it is in the human heart, in human nature, to extend physical life indefinitely. Historically, we can see this in the earliest of civilizations (Sumer, Egypt) and in the Word of God: 'God has set eternity in the heart of man,' (Ecc. 3:11). Every human being, in fact, every living thing, seeks to prolong its biological life.

The deepest desire in man is: to be, to be forever, to be without end. The entire universe could view us as a useless spec, a nothing, but for each of us we want to live forever and ever. We do not want to not exist. We want to live on and on and on—to live for the being that we are as we know ourselves to be here and now. The fact is that on an experiential level, we are the center of our universe. Because of this, the question of the duration of our soul often tortures us (at least in human viewpoint apart from biblical revelation).

What we do not often realize is how horrendous it would be if no one ever died on this Earth. Putting aside, for a moment, the issue of an overpopulated Earth without resources to feed everyone, it would be unbearable for any human being. Seen in this light, death is a priceless and wonderful gift.

Imagine that you were offered a potion, an elixir, that would give you immortality on this Earth in your present physical status, at your age. By taking this potion, you will never die. Rather, you

would persist as a human being on Earth, and you would live in good physical health forever. Would you take the potion?

Before you make the decision, consider the implications. For all of its appeal, the first problem you would encounter would probably be boredom. Immortality in this present state would be unbearably tedious. The life you enjoy now consists of various phases involving diverse mundane activities for each stage. Can you imagine doing the same mundane things over and over that you did at one stage of life, for millions and trillions of endless years? The mundane details would be anything but absorbing, new, and captivating. They would be intolerable and infinitely mundane.

There is also the issue of purposes that are related to the each stage of life. In each stage of our lives, we have different earthly purposes. We have different earthly goals as children, teenagers, young adults, spouses, parents, and grandparents. This variety provides a richness to life that would be lost if one was stuck at one age on Earth for all of eternity. The daily routine would be simply too familiar, too predictable, and too boring. In a word “joyless.” There is every reason to think that after a few trillion years of doing the same predictable, mundane earthly things that the person would stop taking the potion of everlasting life and die, so they end all the monotony. (I understand that with the Christ-centered life even mundane details can be enjoyable as we live in the presence of Christ, but in this thought experiment I am only focusing on physical life on Earth as such—which just is how the mass of humanity lives who does not think they want to die.)

An endless and eternal life on Earth in our present state would also destroy the preciousness of our most beloved human relationships. If you lived forever, you would see your spouse die, your children die, your grandchildren die, and on and on and on. Given that you are going to live for trillions and trillions of years, you would likely marry again, and again, and again. After a few thousand years, you would have had hundreds or thousands of husbands or wives. Moreover, your life now has a curve going from childhood to older age. If you lived forever at your present age, you would lose the sense of the narrative of your life. It would be a blur filled with massive amounts of deaths of loved ones that would never end. Moreover, there would not be a sense of urgency about anything. What a horrible life it would be! Death prevents that nightmare!

So, although our beings scream for more existence in this life, it is good that God will move us forward to the next life by ending this one. Seen in this light, death really is a most precious gift from God. We get to live an exciting life of change, various phases, and keep our most precious and beloved relationships with a sense of uniqueness that would otherwise not be possible. Of course, for the unbeliever it is a different story as he goes from the loss of everything both here and for eternity. What a shame, given that salvation is offered to everyone as a gift paid for by Jesus Christ when He bore all sins on the Cross. The sole issue in salvation is faith in Christ (John 1:12; Acts 16:31; Eph 2:8-9).

On the Glory Road

Pastor Don