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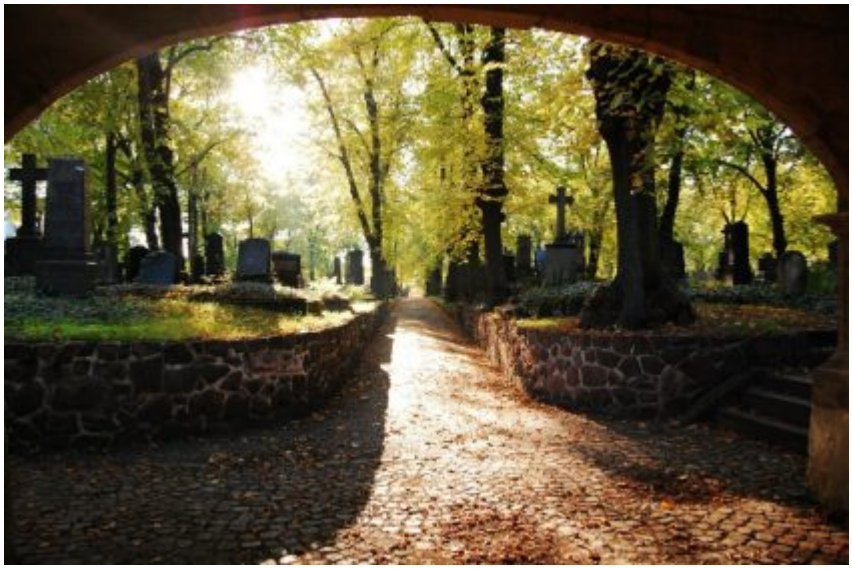
Life and Death Lessons



By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #166 ~

An unpopular subject has recently become *“popular.”* Every day we hear reports of all these people who have died in the United States due to this flu virus, COVID-19. As of today, that number is a shocking and staggering 36,000 deaths. That’s a whole lot of people, now 12 times the number who died on 9/11. But isn’t it true that death happens all the time? Every day, on average, 7,700 people die in this country, and they die in all kinds of ways. In 2017, according to the CDC, 647,457 people died of heart disease, 599,108 of cancer, 169,936 of accidents, 160,201 of respiratory problems, 70,237 of drug overdose, 55,672 of influenza, 47,173 of suicides, etc. (cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/death). Without question, death is a sad and unpleasant subject, not something we like to think about.

But God wants you to think about death, at least once in a while – and He will bring it to your attention. How does He do this? By death that is

sudden, is unexpected, is by an accident, a murder, a suicide, a tornado, a pandemic, a war, etc. You are especially affected by death when it's close and personal, when a family member, friend or neighbor passes away. Most of you have been touched by death in this way. And why? Because God wants you to come face to face with death so that you think soberly about life and spiritual realities.

We live in a world that spends a lot of time, energy and money on physical and external things. There is work, the weekend and vacation. There are foods, supplements and vitamins. There is our health and medicines. There are clothes, cosmetics and hairdos. There is running, swimming and biking. There are cars, houses and smart phones. None of these are bad in and of themselves, but the truth is that we tend to focus on the physical and forget the spiritual. A sinner once said to himself, *"Take it easy, eat, drink and be merry"* (Luke 12:19). But Jesus said to his disciples, *"What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul."* Matt. 16:26

God wants to use a person's death to get our mind off physical things, to get us to think about the spiritual world, to seek Him and learn what's most important. Now when people think about death, they often get sad, scared, fearful, depressed, upset, angry and confused. That's why we must know what God says in His word about death, and there's a lot there, a very instructive passage being Luke 13:1-5. The news of the day was that some people had been brutally murdered, and others had suddenly died in an accident. Those with Jesus were thinking these people must have died because they were *"bad"* sinners, but they failed to see their own sin, and that they too were sinners who deserved to die.

And so, Jesus twice told these self-righteous sinners, *"Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."* He wanted them to know they were guilty and spiritually dead, and that they needed to repent of their sin, or they would not just physically die, but perish, be eternally dead and ruined. God wanted to wake these people up, to help them see their

need to turn from their sin and trust in Christ before they would physically die, before it would be too late. Ecclesiastes 7:2 tells us: *"It is a better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone, and the loving should take this to heart."* That is, COVID-19 deaths are to instruct lost souls about their need for Christ.

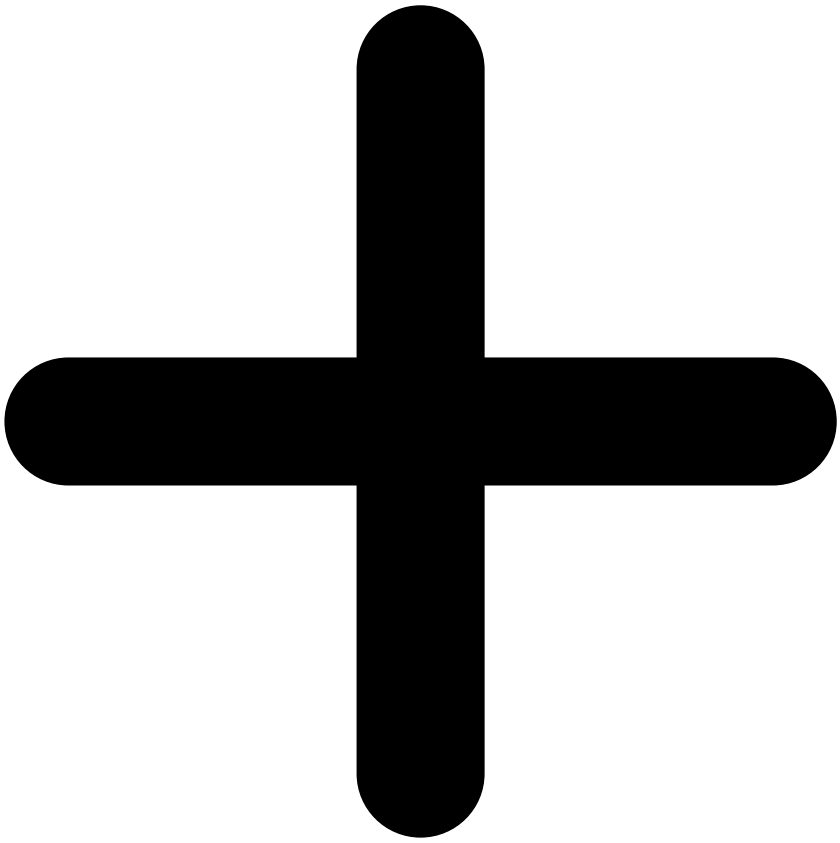
Why Christ? Because a person's main problem is his sin, that he doesn't love God, which is seen in his pride, anger, selfishness, disobedience, idolatry, immorality, etc. And the result of sin is death! *"The soul that sins will die"* (Ezek. 18:20). *"The wages of sin is death*" (Rom. 6:23). Now death does not mean ceasing to exist, but here is what it does mean. 1st, sin results in spiritual death, meaning a person is separated from God, and has no spiritual relationship with Him. 2nd, sin results in physical death, the separation of the soul from the body. 3rd, sin results in eternal death. That is, the person who continues to sin on earth, who remains spiritually dead, and then physically dies, will be eternally dead, that is, forever separated from God, and forever punished by God. Matt. 25:41, 46

Christ is the only answer to this problem of sin. Why? Because *"God made Him* (Christ) *who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Cor. 5:21). God the Father placed our sins upon Jesus and then punished Him, meaning Jesus paid the penalty for our sins. He died for us but then rose from the dead, His death and resurrection being the only means by which we can defeat sin and death. The person who repents of his sin and believes Jesus died in his place will not perish, but is forgiven and spiritually made alive in Christ. When Christ comes back to rapture the church, he will physically be made alive, will receive a perfect, powerful and glorified body. Those who believe in Christ's victory receive eternal life – spiritual life when you are born of the Spirit, and physical life at the coming of Christ. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall <u>not perish</u>, but have <u>eternal life</u>."* John 3:16, John 10:27-28

How does God want a person to respond to the death he sees in the world, or to the death of a loved one or close friend? As I just said, the unbeliever needs to see death as a wake-up call from God, a spiritual prod moving him to repent of his sins so he can be forgiven and receive eternal life. Now if you are saved, this is how you should think about death:

* Know that God is sovereign over every person's death. Acts 5:1-11, Acts 12
* Be thankful you were spiritually saved and will be physically saved at Christ's coming.
* Pray for the lost, those spiritually dead, and as God leads, share the life-giving gospel message with them.
* As long as you are alive on earth, know there is still work God wants you to do. Phil. 1:21
* Don't overly grieve when believing loved ones die, for you will see them again in heaven, and soon.
* Know that there will be much more death on this earth before the coming of Christ, and so, don't be too sad or surprised when it happens. Just keep persevering and keep looking for Christ to return to rapture the church. Matt. 24:9, 28-31; Rev. 6:8-9, 7:7-14
* Know that it won't be long before you die, or are raptured, and are taken to heaven. *"For yet in a very little while, He who is coming, will come, and will not delay."* Heb. 10:37

P.S. An important article that relates to this is "Why Do Believers Die?' – A Memorial Service Message."





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