

Suffering in the world :Death

A lesson adopted from a discussion paper written by His Grace Bishop Youseff.
(<http://www.suscopts.org/resources/literature/219/overcoming-the-finality-of-human-death/>)

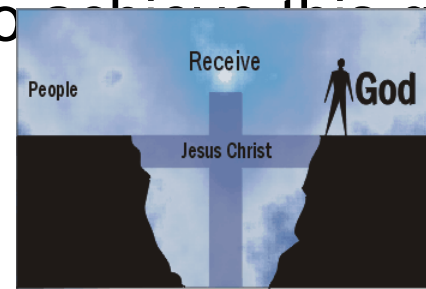
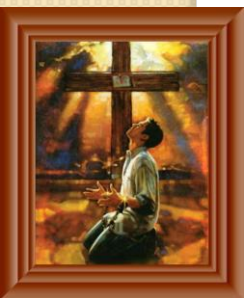
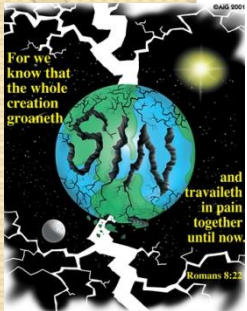
In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them All the days of old. (Isaiah 63:9)



Introduction

“O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” (I Corinthians 15:55)

Our humanity is manifest in our sinful nature. We are born mortal and therefore inevitably naturally prone and inclined to sin. One of the privileges of being a Christian is the availability, at our disposal, of forgiveness once we repent and ask for it. However, being a Christian means so much more than just having our sins forgiven. It is striving for goodness through good works; journeying toward Heaven, the ultimate destination, where we will attain **immortality and eternal glory**. Being a Christian is essentially centred around working hard to achieve this goal.



What is the cause of death?

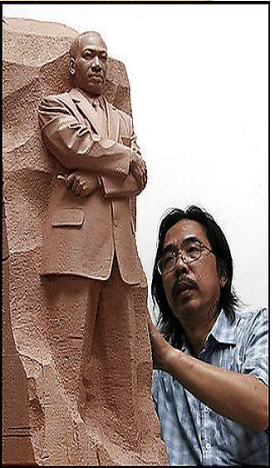
- Tertullian says, "...Death resulted from man's arbitrary choice, if he had not sinned, he certainly would not have died."

Therefore we understand that death is a direct result of sin and as everyone sins then everyone must face death. Originally God did not intend it so. He intended his creation to live in paradise with him in perfection, however through the envy of the devil they were corrupted and therefore needed to be perfected once again.




- Methodius tells this beautiful story which corresponds to the resurrection of man...

"An eminent artisan once created a noble statue, made of gold. It was beautifully proportioned in all of its members exquisite to look upon. But there was an evil man who was so jealous over this beautiful statue that he could no longer bear to see its beauty. So in his envy, he mutilated the statue, destroying its elegance. Upon discovering this, the artificer decided to cast the statue over again. He had bestowed much pain, labor, and care upon the statue. And he wanted it to be free from defect. So his only choice was to melt the statue down and then remold it to its original beauty. Now, God's plan seems to be similar. Upon seeing man, His most beautiful work, corrupted by envious treachery, He could not bear to leave man in such a condition. For He loved man and He did not want man to remain blemished forever and to carry blame for all eternity. So He dissolves man again back to His original materials. In this way, by remoulding man, all of man's blemishes can waste away and disappear. So the melting down of the statue corresponds to the resurrection after death"




- Irenaeus (c. 180) looks at death from the same perspective. He alludes to man's death as a termination to man's sinful nature. For with death, man ceases to sin. Death puts an end to sin by the dissolution of the flesh. This dissolution should take place in earth, so that man, ceasing at length to live to sin, dies that he may begin to live with God. Irenaeus further explains that although the body is dissolved at the appointed time, because of original sin and disobedience, it is placed as it were, in the crucible of the earth to be re-cast again. When it is re-cast, it will not be a corruptible body but rather a pure one no longer subjected to decay. To each body, its own soul will be restored.





What is the meaning of death in the NT after Jesus died on the cross

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- The Lord Jesus Christ has overcome the suffering of this world; and so shall His faithful followers. Therefore when celebrating the Glorious Resurrection, we contemplate on the Lord Jesus Christ conquering death and opening the doors of the heavenly kingdom.
 - The resurrection takes us from a world of evil actions, (man against man), in which everything will eventually be abolished after a time; to a heavenly world free from sin where men will live with each other in brotherly love, purity, and everlasting peace.
 - St Paul teaches us that to die is a gain, not a loss..."*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:21).
 - Therefore death has no longer become a thing we should fear but something we should look forward to and always strive to be ready for.

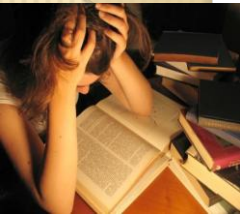


- *"I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as the others who have **no** hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13).*



- The "looked for" salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ has given us through His Glorious Resurrection, is our hope. Our hope lies in our striving while here upon this earth. It moves us to do the works that God would want us all to do. The work of the Lord leads us to the hope of eternal life.

To explore the glory and richness of the new life in heaven as a result of our departure from here.



Have you ever thought to yourself that sometimes life can be too much, as a student it always exams and assignments, then later it becomes work and family, etc etc.. It never really stops.. When can I have a break?



- The truth of the matter is life never stops, so long as your living in this world the devil will try everything to make you loose concentration on what the big picture is, and that's heaven.
- Whilst here on this earth we can work, study and achieve great success, but we can never take it with us. The moment you die all your academic and worldly success will cease and the only thing that will matter will be the works you undertook for the kingdom of God.

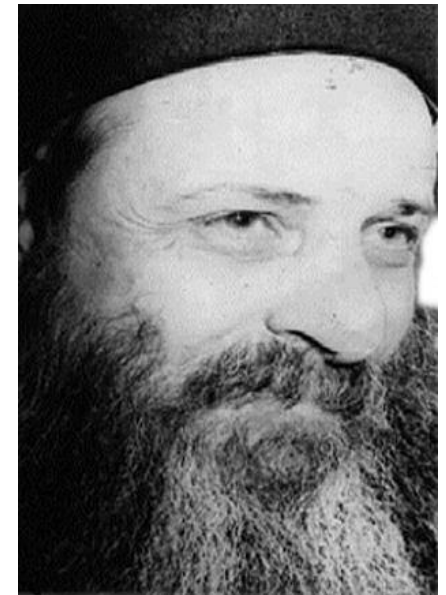




That's why our teacher St Matthew reminds us...*But lay for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal* (Mt 6:20). For when we set our minds on the things to come we will not be burdened with the life we live.

On the first anniversary of the ordination of Father Pishoy Kamel, the church put on a huge celebration in his honour, and during these celebrations he was presented with a gold cross and chain. The church at that time had not been built and was still in the beginning of its development.

Father Pishoy stood up, thanked everyone for their generous gift and then said to them, Is it right that Father Pishoy should wear a gold cross and chain when the church is still made out of mud brick? He then took the gold cross and chain and put it in the donation box in front of everyone and said, Saint George is more worthy of it than I am.





- Here we see Fr Pishoy as someone who always had the heavenly kingdom before his eyes, his life's work was to always please the Lord and even when he was given a small gift, he would give it to the Lord, that's why when we eventually leave this world and see Fr Pishoy (and the host of saints) you will see them arrayed in such a grand way that no human can describe, because whilst on the earth they strived for the kingdom of heaven and hence will be rewarded greatly when they arrive there.



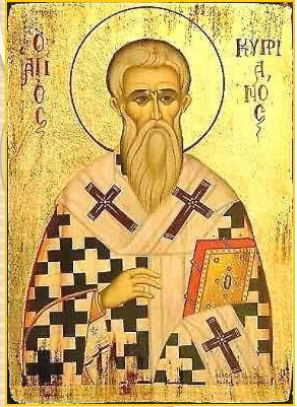
- ***In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. John 14:2***

So how do we deal with the loss of a family member or a friend in the case of his/her departure, and what is the role of FAITH.

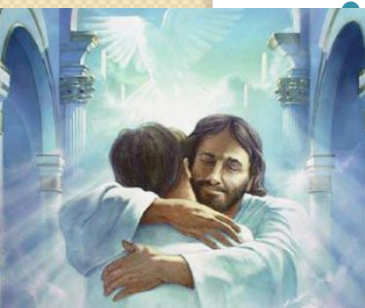
- When we pray the Lord's Prayer... We use the phrases... Our Father Who art in Heaven..... Thy Kingdom Come. ...Thy will be done.....



- And then if a loved one or friend pass away we ask why? Why is God doing this to me?... yet all our lives we've been praying that we once again meet our father in heaven, and ask that we may enter his kingdom while praying it is done according to his will.



- St Cyprian say to those who get upset when a loved one dies... "How preposterous and absurd it is, that while we ask that the will of God should be done, yet when God calls and summons us from this world, we do not at once obey the command of His will, Do we wish to be honoured with heavenly rewards by Him to whom we come unwillingly? Why, then do we pray and ask that the Kingdom of Heaven may come, if the captivity of earth delights us?"
- St Cyprian also says, "No one should be made sad by death. In living, there is labour and peril. In dying, there is peace and the certainty of resurrection."



Therefore if we truly had faith that when we die we are in the heavenly paradise there should be no sadness. Similar to a friend going on holidays to a beautiful tropical island. Are we sad when they leave because they will be having such a great time, off course not. Therefore rejoice when a loved one leaves this world because they are now living in the greatest paradise imaginable... The embrace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So how do we as Christians deal with a friend who is suffering the grief of death of a family member ?

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God" (Rom 8:28)

Dealing with peoples grief is a very difficult thing to do as everyone is different and deals with loss and tragedy in their own way, and although we may be good friends we are in no means professional counsellors and therefore we must learn that our capacity is limited, and shouldn't think that we are there to offer them guidance or a lecture.

So dealing with a friend who has suffered the loss of a loved on we must begin by asking our Lord to give us his blessing and guidance to do his will.

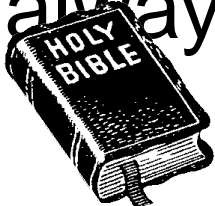
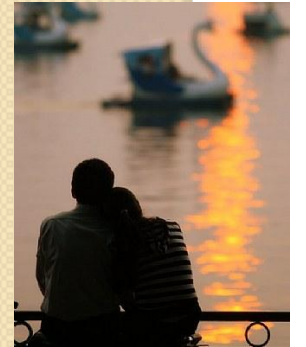
Our role as friends should be to offer our friends whatever they need ie sometimes in this situation the person may need space and time to be alone with themselves and God to get over their grief, other times they may just want you there with them as a shoulder to cry on and other



- Therefore you must judge every circumstance as different and always lift up your heart in prayer asking our good saviour to consol your friend and use you in anyway possible to be that person.

- Finally suggest that the person maintains there bible reading and daily prayers for these two together will always produce peace

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In Conclusion



Thus, we are the "elect of the Lord" having the right to salvation through baptism. Yet as "elect" we have not obtained the salvation of eternal glory which we must continually strive to obtain. St. Paul explains this by saying, *For I endure all things for the elects' sakes that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory*" (II Timothy 2:10).

Obtaining the salvation of eternal glory will be through endurance; producing good works. In spite of calamity and hardship that lie before us, nothing will prevent the progression of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said,

"But, he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

Therefore let us all give thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ Who "abolished death by His death, and manifested resurrection by His resurrection."

