



GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER DEATH

Death, as most people know it, is merely physical death. Many do not understand what the Bible teaches about real death – the penalty for sin. The majority of humanity fear physical death, what Christ characterized as “killing the body” (**Matt. 10:28**). He told people that they should really fear the eternal death of both body and soul in hell.

True death goes beyond the cessation of one's physical existence on earth. The death that all human beings share is the death of the body. For most people this is scary enough. They fear the end of life as they know it. What they don't know is that their souls will go on living beyond the grave. Many do not believe there is an afterlife. They are living their lives only for their time on earth.

The Bible teaches that at the end of our life here on earth we will face God's judgment (**Heb. 9:27**). The TV beer commercial is half-right when it says, “You only get one chance in life, live it with gusto.” There is no second chance after our physical death. When our life here on earth ends, our destiny in the afterlife is fixed. We only get to live one life here, so let's make sure about where we're going to spend our next life. Our afterlife is going to last forever.

Christ said that the death that we all fear should not be feared by Christians. Even though physical death is part of sin's curse upon the human race, its sting is not really “deadly.” It can't separate us from God (**Rom. 8:38**). The death and resurrection of Christ guaranteed the immunity of His followers from eternal death (**John 11:25-26**). Physical death can't take away what Jesus has given us. It can't be interrupted by the death of our bodies because our spirits have passed from death into life eternal (**John 5:24**).

God's evil enemy mistakenly believes that he could destroy humanity by sowing sin and death on earth. Like a thief who works in the dark of night, he roams our world to steal, kill and destroy man's divine destiny. Physical death is Satan's most awesome weapon of mass destruction. He uses physical death to deceive people into giving up their souls in order to postpone it. He tells them, “Life is short, you can die anytime, so live like there's no tomorrow.”

But he is wrong – dead wrong. Yes, life here on earth may seem brief, but there's eternity after death. The tomorrow that awaits us beyond the grave never ends. The choices that we make during our life here will determine where we will spend all our tomorrows throughout eternity. We can choose to spend eternity with our Heavenly Father who loves us and

longs for us or we can choose His enemy as our forever cell-mate in his prison of never-ending fire.

In this short life of ours, we have the freedom to make a choice. It cost God very much – too much – to purchase for us the freedom to choose life or death. We have a sovereign God who exploited Satan's most awesome weapon of mass destruction to His enemy's disadvantage. God used physical death – the death of His only Son on the cross – to save man from eternal death. Satan's instrument of war became the instrument of his defeat. By dying Christ gained victory over death. And when He rose from the grave on the third day He sealed the death of death.

Death – physical and eternal death – has no more power over us. It is no longer to be feared by those who believed in Jesus and have passed from death into life. God's sovereignty over death is manifested in how He exploited it to fulfill His destiny for us. What the enemy meant to bring desolation and despair God used to give us hope and assurance. What Satan meant to separate us from God became the gateway to our eternal fellowship with Him.

In the end, all of creation will come to realize that death is God's idea. Although Satan is ultimately responsible for sin and the sting and curse of death, it was God who really invented death. When He made creatures to live with Him forever, God intended for them to be free moral beings. They could choose to be intimately connected to Him or exist in their own world apart and independent from Him. If they chose their destiny with God, they would live with the highest purpose and experience the apex of joy. This would be true life – the gift of the Life Giver. But if they chose to exist apart from God, they could only experience the penultimate, diametric opposite of life in the most profound and extreme way. This would be death – the destiny of Satan and evil angels.

Through eternal death for rebellious beings God effectively ends and contains sin and evil in His universe. Through physical death God puts a demarcation line for the time in which sinful humanity can choose life. And for those who choose eternity with Him, God uses physical death to bring their weary souls home. When we truly understand the sovereignty of God over death, we can say even now, “*Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*” (**1 Cor. 15:54-55**)