Name MODEL

Text Plato's "Apology"

According to Socrates, it is more important to be righteous than to fear death even if it means not doing everything to avoid dying. When Socrates receives his guilty verdict, he refuses to say whatever it takes to avoid the death penalty.

In the face of his conviction, Socrates remains convinced that the accusations against him are false and that he "never intentionally wronged any one" (129). Certain of his innocence, Socrates refuses to appeal to the jury by admitting that he deserves to be punished and asking for a lesser penalty like imprisonment or exile (135-145). Socrates acknowledges that other people in his position might get down on their knees, "weeping and wailing and lamenting" pleading for a lesser sentence (159). Because he thinks he would be lying, he holds firm, saying, "I will not say of myself that I deserve any evil, or propose any penalty" (133-134).

Socrates' behavior makes it clear that he fears being unrighteous, or immoral, more than he fears death. He tells the audience, "The difficulty, my friends, is not to avoid death, but to avoid unrighteousness" (167-168). For Socrates, living according to how you think humans should live is the most important thing in life—even more important than survival. Even though others might act differently, Socrates claims "I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live" (162-163).

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