

Reference Material (Lecture 5 – The Resurrection of Christ)

“The great truths which the apostles declared were...asserted...in the face of the most appalling terrors that can be presented to the mind of man. Their Master had recently perished as a malefactor....The interest and passions of all the rulers and great men in the world were against them....Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but contempt...bitter persecutions...and deaths. Yet this faith they zealously did propagate; and all these miseries they endured undismayed, nay rejoicing. As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution....They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith...and these motives were pressed upon their attention with the most melancholy and terrific frequency. It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact....If then their testimony was not true, there was no possible motive for its fabrication.”

--Excerpt from *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence* (1846, Simon Greenleaf, one of the foremost legal scholars of the 19th century)

In light of Jesus’ teaching about life after death, why should a believer cry over the passing of a Christian loved one?

It is comforting to know that Jesus was moved to tears by the sadness of grieving people. Tears are a gift from God to heal the deepest hurts that cannot be touched by any medicine, and they are a meaningful tribute to the depth of feelings generated by a loved one. While our culture accepts and honors tears at the moment of death and burial, there is often an unease that develops if someone weeps much later. The pressure to control tears is sad, for deep, strong feelings will remain for a long time, and the need for release remains as well. In most cases, the hardest times come long after the initial shock of loss. There is no shame in continuing to mourn, for grief seems to require all of us to pass through definite stages of recovery, and the process always takes time. There is no more lack of trust in responding to emotional hurts than there is in dressing a wound that afflicts the body. Neither is there any merit in “putting on a happy face” and denying the existence of real sorrow. The true joy and peace of the believer comes through experiencing the Lord’s comfort in the midst of pain, not instead of pain.

How can a Christian deal with the fear of death?

While trust in the resurrection is very comforting to the believer, there are still aspects of death which remain disturbing and cause most people to seek to hold death at bay as long as possible. The person who fully anticipates the joys of heaven may still experience fear over the process of dying. Something within us pulls back from the loss of control, the possibility of pain, the sense of the unknown, and the tearing away from people and places we love. Both the person dying and the family and friends experience very similar feelings, including a concern for what life will be like once the loved one is no longer present.

The first step in dealing with these fears is to admit they are present and to accept them as natural. Experiencing such fears is not an indicator of lack of faith or courage. Thus the believer can openly and without shame talk to God and to loved ones about these fears, asking for support and comfort.

Source: “Surprised by Suffering—Study Guide for the Video or Audio Series”, p. 67, 104, 106