

The Fate of Loved Ones

1. Concern for the Dead

- A. **Illus:** John Hall in England; story of brother killed while eluding police.
- B. 2 Cor 4:3-4 - Gospel veiled minds blinded by Satan. Some blinded by **emotion**.
No greater emotion than thought that *someone I love may not be in heaven*.
- C. Destroying spiritual interest:
 - 1. Some accept death by hoping loved one in “better place,” looking down, guiding.
 - 2. Others view spiritual world as place of “maybes.” Second chance, God lenient, hell not real, etc.
 - 3. When learn that eternity is either/or, judged by this life, certain teachings are absolute, thought of lost loved one can kill spiritual interest.

2. Problems in Answering Concerns

- A. Tempting **wrong** answers:
 - 1. “You shouldn’t worry about that” - But feelings legitimate, natural concern.
 - 2. “You won’t think about that in heaven” - But they think about it *now*. Anxiety arises from *lostness* of loved one, not impact on me in heaven.
 - 3. “God will make allowances” - Not our place to hold out false hopes; ignore truth.
- B. **Rational** answers which don’t always help a highly **emotional** issue:
 - 1. God doesn’t owe any individual anything; salvation is by grace on condition.
 - 2. What is to be gained by destroying self? People mimic idols’ self-destruction.
 - 3. Nothing you can do about it now. True, but not very comforting.
 - 4. A potential excuse for *everyone*. Who can say *all* loved ones to be in heaven?
- C. Are there other grounds which may help this grief without raising false hopes?
The person **may have to admit the obvious**, that loved ones will undoubtedly not make it to heaven.

3. Possible Approaches

A. What would the person have wanted me to do?

1. Lk 16:27-28 - The rich man begged for Lazarus to be sent to his brothers ...
2. The **living** say, "If they are not in heaven, then I don't want to be there either."
*But the **dead** don't say that!* They have concern for the living.
3. This appeals to the wishes of the dead person and defends their honor.

B. Everyone has the right to exercise God-given free will.

1. We must respect that right for others as God does (even though it grieves Him that free-will is exercised in rejecting Him).
2. **Illus:** Elizabeth English. Grieved over son; wouldn't take L.S. "I am condemning him." *No man by doing what is right condemns another apart from their will!*

C. It is beyond our ability to render judgment in specific cases.

1. If we struggle with lesser judgments of character in *this life*, how can we judge for *eternity*? ("Why did they say that?"; "I wonder what she is thinking.")
2. The only one qualified to account for all the variables is Christ - 1 Cor 4:3-5.
3. We must teach truth but leave individual judgments to God.

D. God's judgments are *always right*. God **does** have the right to condemn, and when He does it is righteous - Rom 2:2, 5.

E. We must want to please God and ***more than anything(-one) else*** - Mt 10:37.

1. Paul's love for Jewish brethren - Rom 9:1-3, but they had not submitted to the righteousness of God - Rom 10:1-3. Did not accuse God but worked faithfully.
2. If we *really* loved the person, we would work to save ourselves and others who are *descendants* of that person. This would honor the person's name, influence.
3. **Ex:** Christian siser: Father died, mad at God for taking him. But it is *rank selfishness* to throw away her own salvation. How can it honor her father or vindicate him to stop worshiping, teaching, studying, growing? To be *worldly*?

Conclusion: As with any other obstacle, God's truth must take precedence in the heart of the believer.