

The Fear of Death

Bring to me to-night a lotus tied

With thread from a house where none has died . . .

There stands not by the Ganges' side

A house where none hath ever died. (The law of death)

Death is inevitable. Our existence is not a continuous feast or a constant struggle. Biology teaches us death is normal It will come to each one of us. Is death normal? Many people say "Dead is dead. It is the last curtain to fall on the stage of life."

Is death the end of everything? Let's face it. Many people fear death. They try to cover up their fear with a set of euphemisms remote from the language of ordinary man. Persons no longer die, they "pass-on " or "they step out of the picture." The body is no longer a corpse; it is the "departed." Cemeteries are no longer for the dead. They are memorial parks for the "living." Aren't the modern, elaborate and expensive funeral customs devices to do away with the reality of death? The great Italian poet Leopardi, who since his youth, expressed in beautiful poetry his longing for death, was the first one to flee Naples, when cholera struck the city. And nobody was allowed to talk about death in the presence of the philosopher Schopenhaur.

Why this fear for death? It is the fear of the unknown. You cannot take anything a long when you die. You have to leave everything behind, your wife or husband, your money and home. There is no built-in safe in any casket. Death is also a very lonely experience. You must go through, without any human company.

Dead is dead! Is that all? Does death belong to life as its meaningful conclusion? Death does not need to be feared. And it is not something normal. It is last enemy of man. The theologian Bonhoeffer said just before his execution by the Nazis "This is not the end for me it is the beginning of life!"

The Bible has a real message of hope. We don't need to be afraid to speak about death or face it squarely and honestly. In Christ death has been overcome. "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ...

Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Life does not end, it begins with death. Death is not a meaningful conclusion to life. It is the beginning of a life of endless service, unhampered by the failures of sin and physical limitations. Someone wrote ,

"A little while with grief and laughter,
And then the day will close;
The shadows gather . . what comes after
No man knows

Is this it? No! On the basis of the Bible, I can have certain hope, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And

He that sat upon the throne said, "Behold I make all things the new." And He said unto me, "Write: for these words said are true and faithful."

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March, 1972