

Hebrew 2:14-18

Bridge –

According to a middle-eastern fable, a merchant from Baghdad once asked his servant to run an errand. While at the markets, the servant went around a corner and saw ‘Lady Death’. She terrified him so much that he returned to his master in a great rush. “I am terrified,” said the servant. “I want to take the fastest horse and ride towards Samarra.”

Seeing how absolutely terrified his servant was, the master granted the request.

Later that afternoon, the merchant visited the markets himself and he too met Lady Death. He asked, “Why do you startle my servant?”

Lady Death answered, Frankly, it was I who was startled. I couldn’t understand why your servant was in Baghdad, because I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.

*How do non-believers live in light of death looming over their heads?
(selfish, greedy, try to get everything possible out of life, etc.)*

**The fear of death is toxic to non-Christians and Christians. It leads to the loss of life here and now.*

14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

- (Incipient) Gnosticism – 1 John 4:1-3 / Apoc Pet 81, 15-24
- Käsemann - “Jesus as God walking on the face of the earth.” “... the full work of divinizing Jesus falls to John, who has no mere human being but the Word of God incarnated, striding an inch above the ground.” John’s gospel is “naïve docetism.”
- Gen 3:15

15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Hebrews – written in the mid-60s after Nero launched an empire-wide persecution.

Roman historian Tacitus, “Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired (Annals of Tacitus, 15.44)”

How were the early Christians able to endure such persecution without fear?

What is the proof that Christ has released us from the fear of death?

16 For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. 17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He

might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Early in Andy Stanley's preaching career, he bought a "new to him" Infiniti.

On Saturday morning, while taking out the trash, he noticed that there was a large A scratched into the top of the hood.

Furious, he went inside and confronted his boys. Quickly, one of his boys said, "It was Allie!"

So, he called Allie out into the garage. Pointing to the hood, he asked her, "Did you do this?" Sheepishly, she said, "yes sir, I did it."

What was he supposed to do? There was no way to explain to her the significance of what she did...how much it would cost, how much trouble it would be to get fixed, how much it would be to get a rent a car,

So what do you do in that kind of situation? Sever the relationship? Demand payment? Rant and rave? Of course not.

He did the only thing he could do for someone he loved as much as he loved her. He knelt down and said, "Allie, please don't do that anymore." She said, "Yes sir daddy."

THE POINT – Christ paid a debt that we couldn't pay. He has defeated death so that we don't have to fear.

Do we as Christians still fear death? Should we? What helps us overcome our fear?

What would life be like if Christians had a window into heaven? How would that change your daily life? (less concerned with me, more concerned with others, more actively evangelistic, etc.)

For those of you that can remember the days before you were a Christian, how did you live differently before you knew that death wasn't something to fear?

How should we live in light of the fact that Christ has defeated death?