

## *Good Grief*

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13 Paul says that he does not want the believers to “grieve as others do who have no hope.” A popular text for Christian funerals and memorial services, this passage typically is interpreted as encouraging a distinctive, Christian grief that is grounded in the promise of life after death. Paul does not say that the Thessalonians should not grieve for their lost loved ones—that would be unrealistic and unhealthy. Rather, he says that their grief should be different from the grief of people who have no hope of ever seeing their loved ones again. The Christian Thessalonians are not to be “uninformed about those who have died.” They know that the dead in Christ will rise and that all who believe, living and dead, will be reunited to be with the Lord forever (4:16–18). Such knowledge does not cancel out the grief or sorrow of experiencing the loss of loved ones in this life, but Paul nevertheless urges the grief-stricken Thessalonians to “encourage one another with these words” (4:18).