

***“Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians —
‘He Is Coming Again! Our Faith Will Make All the Difference’”***

Review:

- ***We are living in challenging times. For some of us, these times are more challenging perhaps than we have ever experienced. For others, they do not compare at all (those that have served in the military, for example). However, the message of the apostle here in the words we shall share together today are relevant, it is clear, to all of us today and always.***

The bottom line is that whatever our circumstances, Christ is coming again FOR US and our faith SHALL make ALL the difference. His message to us is that we should therefore be comforted in the midst of these trials because he has promised and he will fulfill his many promises to us. And this is “by the very word of the Lord Jesus!” Amen and amen.

- ***Paul’s Example Must Now Be Applied — That We All Love One Another and maintain purity in our living, in the world but not “of” the world.***
 - ***Last time we saw how Paul exhorted the believers with words that he said were even the very words of Christ himself. Today, when so many are turning away from the Pauline truth, let us rather cleave to this teaching ever more strongly. The apostle was to be as always, their example in this:***

1 Thess. 4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort [you] by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, [so] ye would abound more and more.

- ***That teaching did not avoid even perhaps one of the most difficult of issues, that of marriage.***
- ***Today we see everywhere weak and ineffective churches failing for many reasons not the least of which is that of worldliness and carnality. And ungodliness in the area of sexuality is often right in the middle of that failure:***

1 Thess. 4:3-5

3 For this is the will of God, [even] your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

- “The will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust **[passions]** of concupiscence **[strong desire]**, even as the Gentiles which know not God: **God established marriage in the Garden of Eden. His high standards for sexuality have not changed and therefore Satan’s greatest desire is to destroy all that God has ordained.**
- **He continued in the verses we examined last time to exalt “brotherly love” and said that would enable one to maintain the high standard of living that God had ordained. What a needed message that is today in our culture that has been ripped apart by every kind of evil with sexual impurity right in the middle of that decline.**

Our Outline Today:

- **Looking Forward to His Return, Let’s Live Responsibly!**
- **Our Personal Faith Will Always Make the Difference, Whatever Comes**
- **Christ’s Resurrection Is the Sure and Eternal Hope of Believers**
- **Our Resurrection Will Follow That of Those That Have Gone Before**
- **No Greater Comfort Is Offered by the Word of Our Living Lord Jesus**

Our Scripture Today: 1 Thess. 4:11-18

I. Looking Forward to His Return, Let’s Live Responsibly!

1 Thess. 4:11-12

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and [that] ye may have lack of nothing.

- “that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you”: **Personal responsibility is the key recommendation here and it is an essential one. Life demands this or the entire culture will break down. All need this, not only believers. But believers as well may, in times of crisis, turn aside into vain and, even godless behavior. That was apparently the situation in Thessalonica. The second letter again mentions it and the**

exhortations found there regarding this very issue are especially strong:

2 Thess. 3:10-14

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

- ***Paul summarizes this part of chapter 3 with these words: “That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and [that] ye may have lack of nothing”. It is so important to know this. Trials in this life are never a justification for godless or lawless living.***

II. Our Personal Faith Will Always Make the Difference, Whatever Comes:

[READ] 1 Thess. 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

- ***Paul now begins to focus on the central reason why he has written this letter, the false teachings that many in Thessalonica had believed as true and the effect that mis-directed faith had had on them.***
- ***The issue was their knowledge of the truth and in this particular situation, that truth was the truth of the pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church which is his Body.***

The simple fact is that false teachings will always corrupt one's faith. Faith must always have an object and that must be the truth of God – and never the lies of the enemy.

- ***The problem being singled out here in the church in Thessalonica is revealed in the verses we shall consider today along with the inevitable consequence of that error. Believing what the false teachers had taught had corrupted the faith of these believers this***

leading to a sorrow of the sort unbelievers have when a loved one passes. Believers are to sorrow of course at such a great loss of their dearest ones having died — but we should never sorrow as unbelievers do who have no hope. After all, we do have a hope that goes so far beyond this life. In fact, our faith latches on to eternity!

The promises of God are given to us for this very reason, that we may abound in life resting in his inestimable glory and grace, for now — and for eternity. Amen.

- ***There is something else here as well. The verse reads: “...But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” “As others that have no hope” is interesting wording. I wonder if the false teachers might have been teaching that there is no physical resurrection at all. That may be and it would explain much about the gravity of the situation in Thessalonica, wouldn’t it? This was a very common view in the cultural environment of the time.***
- ***One additional thing to take note of here is Paul’s use of the word “asleep” here. This is a euphemism. When we fall asleep we expect to awaken in due time and the apostle writes here using that language that those of the assembly that had “fallen asleep in Jesus” [verse 14] would also “awaken” in due time. Our hope which is a hope for life now and beyond will not likely fail if we have this understanding.***
- ***What about today? Is there a clear application of this teaching to our current situation? What is the hope of believers today, a day in which false teachings regarding the return of the Lord abound everywhere? Do you think the doctrinal confusion in our day has affected the faith of believers? What is the proper antidote?***

III. Christ’s Resurrection Is the Sure and Eternal Hope of Believers:

[READ] 1 Thess. 4:14-15

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent **[precede]** them which are asleep.

- ***First, some comments on the text found here in these verses:***

- *Verse 14 starts with the word “if” but Paul is not minimizing the truth of the gospel here but rather emphasizing it. There are several different Greek words translated with the English word “if” in our Bibles. This one in particular strengthens the statement following it and could just as well be translated “since” or “assuming that”.*
- *You also need to be aware that the word “prevent” here in our KJV is a 17th century word now replaced by “precede” in our more contemporary English. Both meant to come before and that is the meaning here.*
- *Also notice that Paul writes that this teaching is “by the word of the Lord”. This means that the Lord himself gave this teaching to Paul for the purpose of encouraging these saints and by application us as well. That is important as I have commented here several times before.*
- *In verse 15 we have reached the major teaching of this chapter: Loved ones who have died are already with the Lord in spirit. But the Lord promises here that they shall be with the Lord physically FIRST, before those that remain. For they will be brought back WITH the Lord at the Rapture, and in resurrected bodies! Those that have gone before will neither miss the full blessing of the Rapture they had so longed for in this life, nor will they have to wait until a general resurrection later (after the Kingdom has ended). Or, as some may have been teaching, that those that had died might have missed out on the blessings of resurrection life altogether!*
- *Finally, I should point out that this event will not at all be like what is taught by our Lord to his disciples in Matt. 24-25 and elsewhere. There are many differences that are significant. The Lord’s teaching during his earthly ministry was for the nation of Israel and the Jews who would live in the tribulation period. This teaching here is directed rather to the Body of Christ. Confusing the two teachings is destructive of understanding. We must always remember to rightly divide the word of truth therefore.*

IV. Our Resurrection Will Follow That of Those That Have Gone Before:

- *The details of the teaching regarding the Rapture of the Church which is His Body are given here.*

[READ] 1 Thess. 4:16-17

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we **[all]** ever be with the Lord.

- ***Furthermore, this was written for the sake of those that had remained, not for those that had died. The teaching here is simple: When the Lord returns for us we will be given a resurrection body as well when we are called to meet the Lord and our loved ones in the air. We will then also be transformed as 1 Cor. 15 makes so crystal clear — but only after the resurrection of those that have gone before.***
- ***The order is important. At the call, the shout, and the voice of the archangel:***
 - 1. The Lord will come from heaven for this great meeting in the air.***
 - 2. The dead in Christ will be raised incorruptible (with physical but resurrected bodies).***
 - 3. We (who remain alive) will be caught up (and changed as 1 Cor. 15 reveals in more detail).***
 - 4. We will be with our loved ones that have gone on before***
 - 5. Then we shall all be forever “with the Lord”.***
 - 6. Our heavenly inheritance will be completed.***
- ***This is the teaching here and it is also so needed today.***

[READ] 1 Cor. 15:51-54

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [must] put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

- *Those of us who have never doubted the truth of the pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church which is His Body may wonder how these dear ones had so easily given up such a precious and powerful teaching. But they did and it speaks clearly of how easily the enemy may lead us astray. Be aware of false teaching as it may easily lead you astray as well.*

V. No Greater Comfort Is Offered by the Word of Our Living Lord Jesus:

[READ] 1 Thess. 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

- *Comfort, comfort, comfort! Great comfort from Christ himself through his apostle of offered here through these words of the Lord. It is therefore always available by faith for those who will take God at his word.*
- *Our faith is always based on the word that we have received. So taking by faith that which a false teacher has taught is dangerous indeed. In this case, the lives of the Thessalonian believers had been turned upside down, just the reverse of what had happened to all of them earlier:*

[READ]1 Thess. 1:9-10

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, [even] Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. **[See Acts 16 & 17 as well]**

- *May this occur in our lives and continue without distractions. We have such great hope under grace. May we stand firm in the faith as delivered to us by Paul and be never led astray. Amen and amen.*

Conclusions / Application: