

May 7, 2017

## “Don’t Grieve Like Those Who Have No Hope”

**Focal Passage: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (ESV)**

Cross References: **2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Luke 23:4; Philippians 1:23; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; Philippians 1:6; Romans 8:30; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:4; James 5:8; Revelation 3:3; Matthew 24:36; John 17:3; Psalm 16:11**

**Lesson Idea:** God’s promises concerning our future are an anchor of hope for our souls in the present.

### BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Apr 30 1 Chron 1-2	May 1 1 Chron 3-5
May 2 1 Chron 6	May 3 1 Chron 7-8
May 4 1 Chron 9-11	May 5 1 Chron 12-14
May 6 1 Chron 15-17	May 7 1 Chron 18-21

**Introduction:** We have seen in the previous chapters that the Christians in Thessalonica had many attributes that were to be commended, and seemed to have a good grasp on the Christian life (**1:3, 1:6-8, 2:13-14, 3:6-8, 4:9-10**). However, in our passage this week, we discover that the Thessalonians had been misguided when it came to eschatology (the study of what the Bible says is going to happen in the end times). We will see later on in our study of the letters to the Thessalonians, that they had received some false teaching on this front, and were troubled by it (**2 Thessalonians 2:2**). They were particularly concerned for those who had already died, fearing that they might somehow miss out on the hope of Christ’s return.

With that in mind, Paul wrote to God’s people with the intent of sharing the blessed hope they have in the second coming of Christ. The section we will examine this week has less to do with *how* and *when* these events will transpire, and more to do with Paul lovingly reminding us of the simple fact that Jesus is coming back for us, and that those who have died in Christ have just as much hope as those who are still alive.

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

*13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

### DISCUSSION:

- V. 13
  - How does uninformed theology result in hopeless grief?
  - Why does Paul refer to the dead as “*those who are asleep*.”

**Note:** It is important to point out that the term “asleep” does not refer to the state of our soul, but rather to our physical bodies. Scripture is clear that when Christians die, although our bodies go to the grave, our spirit is immediately in the presence of God (**2 Corinthians 5:8, Luke 23:4, Philippians 1:23**). Therefore, “asleep” is describing the temporary state of our bodies upon death, not the state of our souls.

- V. 14
  - What is the basis of hope for “*those who have fallen asleep*?” (**1 Peter 1:3**)

**Note:** Paul reminds us that, just as God was faithful to raise Jesus from the dead, “*God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep*.” Hopeless grief has no place in the life of a Christian, because we have the hope that, if God began it, He will certainly complete it (**Philippians 1:6, Romans 8:30**).

- V. 15
  - Why do you think Paul puts a special emphasis on the fact that he is declaring a “*word from the Lord*”?

**Note:** In **2 Thessalonians 2:2**, we see that the believers in Thessalonica had been deceived by false teachers when it came to eschatology. Here in verse 15, Paul makes it clear that the hope he is sharing comes only from the mouth of God. The apostle was adamant that seeking wisdom from teaching that does not mesh with the word of the Lord is a terrible thing for Christians (**Galatians 1:6-9**). Or, to state it positively, Paul was extremely clear that God's word was sufficient in every circumstance (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**)

- V. 16

**Note from Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians:** "Paul introduces the subject of the Lord's return with these simple words: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God." No advance warning, no heads-up, and no notice given. With a shout, a voice, and a trumpet, the Lord will come. Paul makes this same point to the Corinthians when he writes, *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)*. Scriptural support for the imminent return of Christ is not lacking (**Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:4; James 5:8; Revelation 3:3**). The resounding message of the New Testament is that Christ could come at any moment."

**Note:** False teaching and over-fascination concerning eschatology were problems amongst the Churches of Thessalonica. Those problems are prevalent and ever increasing today. For years false teachers have claimed to know the exact time, date, and look of all the events of the end times. Those teachings directly contradict the words of Jesus. He stated, "*Concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only*" (**Matthew 24:36**). With that truth in mind, it seems that the main takeaway that Jesus intended for us concerning the day and the hour would be that we would, "*Therefore, stay*

*awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming*" (**Matthew 24:42**).

- How might the knowledge of the sudden coming of Jesus change the way that you live your life day-to-day?

- V. 17

- What excites you most about this verse?

**Note:** In this verse, Paul references the Lord twice. He states that we will, "*meet the Lord in the air,*" and then states, "*and so we will always be with the Lord.*" Paul's emphasis on meeting the Lord in this verse is vital for us to grasp.

Often times when we speak, sing, or write about eternity, the focus is on getting to spend it with loved ones gone before us, or getting to walk on the streets of gold, or having a mansion of our own. As wonderful as those things will be, Paul's emphasis is on the glorious fellowship we will have with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ for eternity! Paul wants us to consider the ultimate prize of eternal life (**John 17:3; Psalm 16:11**).

- V. 18

- What was Paul's primary purpose in writing these verses of Scripture?
- How are you encouraged/challenged by the words of this passage?
- Who will you encourage with these truths this week? Perhaps a friend/loved one who has lost hope? Or someone who is mourning the loss of a loved one?

- **Application**

- What does this passage teach us about God?