1 Thessalonians

LESSON # 11

4:13-18

Your **memory verses** this week are 4:16-17.

Read through chapter 4, asking the Lord to give you a clear mind and teachable heart as you study His word.

1. **After encouraging the Thessalonians to excel still more in their pursuit of God, Paul shifts gears in order to clear up some misunderstandings that were troubling the church. According to verse 13, what was his goal in addressing this issue?**

Remember, Paul was only in Thessalonica for a short time (between 4 weeks, or at the most a few months). The church there had learned that Jesus could return at any time (see 1:9-10; 5:1-2; 2 Thess. 2:1-2). But apparently the issue of what happens to Christians who die before Jesus returns was never addressed. They were uncertain, and even grieving, thinking that those who died were going to miss out on some aspects of the Lord’s promise. We can’t be entirely certain of every question they had, and it is likely there was a wider variety of opinions and confusion on the matter. Paul sets out to fill in the gaps where they were uninformed on these matters with the goal of comforting them.

1. **Who are “those who are asleep”? Sleep is a common figure of speech for death in the NT (three times in 4:13-15; see also John 11:11-13 and 1 Cor. 15:18-20).**
2. What do the passages below teach about the condition and location of souls who have died in Christ?

2 Corinthians 5:8

Philippians 1:21-23

Luke 16:19-31; 23:43

1. We are told that Jesus Himself wept when His friend Lazarus died (John 11:32-36). Paul does not say Christians do not grieve-he says we do not grieve as others who have no hope (4:13). How does the grief of a Christian over a death of a loved one differ from the grief experienced by an unbeliever? What passages of scripture would support your answer?
2. **What can we deduce about the cause of the Thessalonians’ distress, regarding those who had fallen asleep (verse 14)? What is it they were afraid of?**
3. **Paul responds to the Thessalonians’ concerns for the departed with a very logical train of thought in verse 14. What is his line of reasoning? For more insight on this, see 1 Corinthians 15:20-24.**

Interpretive issue (4:14): “Some interpret the phrase ‘God will bring with Him’ to mean that the spirits of dead believers will come from heaven with Christ to meet their resurrected bodies. Others see in it the truth that at the Rapture, God will bring all believers, living and dead, back to heaven with Christ. While the first view is certainly true, the second one seems to be the emphasis of this passage”. (John MacArthur)

1. **What does Paul say (4:15) is the source of this definitive teaching about what happens at the coming of the Lord?**
2. **Paul now sheds more light on the mystery of the *parousia* or coming of the Lord. List the order of events as listed in verses 16-17?**

1. **The term translated “caught up” (4:17) is used in other passages of Scripture. It is the Latin translation that results in the common reference to this event as the “rapture”. The Greek word actually means to be snatched away. While we may be tempted to think of the rapture as it is depicted in modern books and movies, it is better to think of the term with the same emphasis as the Scripture.**

**What additional information can you gain from 1 Cor. 15:50-58?**

1. **So, if deceased believers are to be resurrected bodily at the *parousia*, where are their souls now? See 4:14; also 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23.**
2. **Does our passage indicate *when* these events will take place?**
3. **When did Paul and his audience seem to think the *parousia* would occur?**
4. Paul did not write this passage to provide a prophetic timeline for the rapture. His purpose was to inform and to encourage (or comfort) that he mentions in 4:18. In what ways would these words have brought comfort to the Thessalonians?
5. **How do each of the events and experiences he mentions provide comfort and encouragement to us in the midst of death (or when we are suffering for our faith or enduring trials, as they were)?**

* The resurrection of dead believers
* The translation of living believers (those who are alive being “caught up”)
* The reunion of dead and living believers in the clouds to be with Jesus forever

1. Are there particular passages of Scripture that have been a great comfort to you during a season where a loved one has died? Take time in your small group to share the ways that you have been comforted by God, either by studying this passage this week or from the other Scriptures.
2. **Dear believer in Christ, does your day to day conduct indicate that you are living as if you might see your Bridegroom today? Do your choices reflect an upward look or are you "tethered" to this present world which is passing away? You must not waste your life. (see Piper's msg -**[**Don't Waste Your Life**](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/ConferenceMessages/ByDate/1858_Dont_Waste_Your_Life/)**). What you are looking for will determine what you are living for. Look for Christ and live accordingly. Let our Lord's words motivate you to strive to maintain a future focus…How should knowing that the Lord could return at any time affect our daily pursuit of holiness?**

**See 1 John 2:28-3:3.**

1. One of the more sobering phrases found in the bible is 1 Thess. 4:13: “as do the rest who have no hope”. Discuss the various ways that modern people attempt to deal with their own mortality.
2. What symptoms of this lack of hope do you see in people today? What false cures can you think of that people have used in attempting to deal with this lack of hope apart from God?
3. **As you read the following thoughts from Jonathon Edwards, underline the one phrase which gives you the most encouragement or exhortation, and then end in prayer.**

*“We should often think of our journey’s end; and make it our daily work to travel on in the way that leads to it.--He who is on a journey is often thinking of the destined place, and it is his daily care and business to get along and to improve his time to get to his journey’s end. Thus, should heaven be continually in our thoughts, and the immediate entrance or passage to it, viz. death, should be present with us. We ought to persevere in this way as long as we live.*

*“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” (Heb. 12:1) Though the road be difficult and toilsome, we must hold out with patience, and be content to endure hardships. Though the journey be long, yet we must not stop short, but hold till we arrive at the place we seek. Nor should we be discouraged with the length and difficulties on the way, as the children of Israel were, and be for turning back again. All our thought and desire should press forward till we arrive.”*

**When We All Get To Heaven by E.E. Hewitt**

1. Sing the wondrous love of Jesus,  
   Sing His mercy and His grace;  
   In the mansions bright and blessed  
   He’ll prepare for us a place.
   * *Refrain:*  
     When we all get to heaven,  
     What a day of rejoicing that will be!  
     When we all see Jesus,  
     We’ll sing and shout the victory!
2. While we walk the pilgrim pathway,  
   Clouds will overspread the sky;  
   But when trav’ling days are over,  
   Not a shadow, not a sigh.
3. Let us then be true and faithful,  
   Trusting, serving every day;  
   Just one glimpse of Him in glory  
   Will the toils of life repay.
4. Onward to the prize before us!  
   Soon His beauty we’ll behold;  
   Soon the pearly gates will open;  
   We shall tread the streets of gold.

*… and thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

**Prayer of Richard Baxter in the "Saints' Everlasting Rest:** *"Hasten, O my Saviour, the time of Thy return. Send forth Thine angels and let that dreadful, joyful trumpet sound. Thy desolate Bride saith come. The whole creation saith come. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."*

**Therefore comfort one another with these words!**