

5.17.20 ~ 1Thessalonians 4:9-18, To Be Always With the Lord...

Last week (**1Thessalonians 4:1-8**) we studied how Paul exhorted the brethren in Thessalonica to continue excelling in the way they conduct themselves, and to abstain from all sexual immorality.

He encouraged them to live as God's people, set apart for God's glory and honor, exemplifying the character of Christ, for this is God's will for them; and quite frankly, this is God's will for us as well, until such a time that we are brought into the presence of the Lord, having been caught up to be with Him forever.

Read 1Thessalonians 4:9-10... The believers in Thessalonica are living exemplary lives, expressing continually [practicing] their love for other believers.

Paul had planted other churches in Macedonia (Berea, Philippi), and it would seem that, some how, Thessalonica had served believers in those other churches; and yet, Paul urges them to excel even more in expressing love.

Read 1Thessalonians 4:11... Paul presents a format for living as God's people.

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life. He wants them to earnestly seek to maintain tranquil, humble, and peaceful lives, not being conflicted like unbelievers, but content..

Romans 12:9, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good." **17-18**, "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

1Timothy 2:1-2, "I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity."

2Thessalonians 3:13, "Do not grow weary of doing good."

Back to **1Thessalonians 4:11...** So, they are to purpose to lead a quiet life *and to attend to their own business.* Simply put, they are to mind their own business, concentrate on their own lives, families, jobs, and responsibilities, and stay out of [do not meddle] in other people's business. Good instruction for us all!

Meddling in others affairs can cause us trouble; in fact, in **1Peter 4:15**, we are warned, "Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler."

In **1Thessalonians 4:11**, after exhorting them to attend to their own business he tells them to *work with their hands, just as he had already commanded them.* Note: Greeks thought hand work [general labor] should be done by slaves, not by free men. But Paul exhorts them to do their own work with their own hands and not expect for others to do the work they should do to provide for themselves.

2Thessalonians 3:10-12, "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear

that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread."

Clearly these commendations and admonitions given by Paul (**1Thessalonians 4:9-12**) are directed to the believers, in order that they behave properly toward outsiders, being good witnesses of Christ, i.e., they are to exemplify a good work ethic and are not to meddle in other people's affairs; but instead, to be good neighbors and to serve as examples in their homes, workplaces, and community.

Read 1Thessalonians 4:13-18... Paul now speaks of the hope that they and all believers have in Christ; we are not to grieve like unbelievers who have no hope, for we will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and be with Him forever!

The believers in Thessalonica were young in the faith, and although Paul had, no doubt, taught them about the end times and future events, it would seem that they were confused about the "rapture" of the church. Paul wants to set their hearts at ease and reassure them that no believer will miss the rapture, whether one of God's children has died or is still alive at Christ's coming in the air, we will all be changed.

You see, our eternal hope "is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." **2Corinthians 5:21**, "God made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

1Corinthians 15:3-4, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, and He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

John 11:25-26, Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Later in **John 11:38-44**, Jesus came to the cave where Lazarus had laid dead now, four days. Jesus told them to remove the stone from the entrance. Jesus prayed to the Father, then He cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."

Lazarus came out of the tomb alive, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus commanded, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Lazarus entered the tomb dead, but he came out of the tomb alive. We have no information about how long he lived, or when he went to be with the Lord, but our confidence is in the sovereign death and resurrection of Jesus Christ Himself.

Christ's sacrificial death paid in full our sin debt to God; His resurrection from the grave demonstrates that He has authority over sin, death, and judgement. Therefore we can trust Him to save and secure us.

Day by day we draw closer to the time when Christ will return for His people in the air; after which, dramatic events will occur in a 7 year period, called the

tribulation (cf. **Daniel 9, Matthew 24, Revelation 8, 9, 16**): war, famine, disease, and death. *COVID-19 is a mild cold compared too what will be..

The sun will turn black, the moon will turn blood red, and the earth will be shaken like never before. In the end, peace and healing will come, but not before a time of great suffering and destruction like the world has never seen before and will never see again.

Just before the 7 years of tribulation begin, Christ will come for His people (**1Thessalonians 4:14-18**). Jesus will leave the Fathers' side and descend to the clouds above the earth, at a time predetermined by the Father.

The spirit of every Christian who has died will be reunited with their original body to be "caught up" to be with Christ. Every Christian still alive at that time will be removed from the earth, "caught up" into the presence of the Lord, where all Christians will be together with the Lord forever.

This event, the Lord's coming to get His people, is called "the rapture of the church." The word "rapture" [comes from the Latin "raptus"] meaning "to seize" "to catch away" or "to snatch up." And so, the earth will be emptied of all Christians. **John 14:1-3**, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

Jesus is talking there about the rapture. Paul doesn't tell us much about the rapture in **1Thessalonians 4:13-18**, so let's go to another text where Paul gives us more information about this great mystery of the rapture.

Read 1Corinthians 15:50-53... Paul says some of the Lord's people will not have to go through the experience of death, but that they will be "changed," "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." The word "moment," is a word form, from which we get the word "atom," referring to "something that is indivisible," this speaks of the "smallest amount of time imaginable."

When Jesus comes for us, it will be instantaneous; it won't be a process, but will happen so fast it will be over before we even know it started! One moment we are here and the next we are gone!

It makes no difference whether our bodies are dead in the grave or alive on the earth; all of God's people will be raptured, taken away suddenly!

When that time comes (cf **1Thessalonians 4:15-17**) Jesus will call His people home to be with Him- the dead will rise first, then those who are still alive on the earth will be instantly changed, and we all will go up together (in our resurrection bodies) to meet the Lord in the air.

Read 1Corinthians 15:54-58... Our greatest enemies will be defeated: death and the grave, sin and the Law. The Bible says "*the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.*" But, in Jesus Christ, we have victory over sin, death, and judgement.

It is no wonder that Paul closes **1Corinthians 15** with verse **58**, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord."

God's Word is clear that we are all sinners deserving God's punishment; yet He loves us and wants to save us.

Romans 3:23-24, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." **Romans 6:23**, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." **Romans 8:1**, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Sin separates us from the Lord and corrupts every part of our lives; but in Jesus Christ, sin is defeated, death is destroyed, forgiveness is given, and eternal life is granted, for all those who believe in Him.

God does all this because He loves us so much and wants us to live in heaven with Him forever!

Romans 8:34-35, "Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" No!

Romans 8:37-39, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

No wonder Paul closes **1Thessalonians 4** with the marvelous message of verse **18**, "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

Nothing can ever separate us from the love of God, nothing can ever separate us from the KING of Kings, and LORD of Lords, Jesus Christ: Crucified, Resurrected, and Coming Again to take us to be with Him for eternity.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father , and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

Pastor Mike

>'(((><