



Welcome to Grace Communion International

November 8, 2020

SERMON

**Let Us Encourage One
Another with These Words**



SCRIPTURE READING

Fred Horne

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (ESV)





“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.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 ESV



“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

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 ESV





“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.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 ESV



THESE WORDS OF GOD ARE INSPIRED AND TRUE
THANK YOU FOR GIVING US SUCH ASSURANCE IN
JESUS
AMEN



As we read the Scriptures, there are a few things we need to remember

This letter is written to a very young church. 1 Thessalonians was written about A.D. 51 not that long after Jesus ascension to heaven.

These early Christians had been called out of a very pagan society. When God calls us, it can take time to break away from old and distorted ideas and teaching of who God is.

Thessalonica was part of Greece. (next slide)



These Thessalonian Christians were called from a pagan society.

There was a lot of mystery around death.

Prominent philosopher's saw death as a permanent sleep. The following are a few quotes.

Theocritus (Idyll, 4.42): "Hopes are for the living; the dead are without hope."

Catullus (5.4–6): "The sun can set and rise again / But once our brief light sets / There is one unending night to be slept through."

Holmes, Michael W.. 1 and 2 Thessalonians: The NIV Application Commentary from Biblical Text to Contemporary Life. Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

These young Christians had some questions, which is perfectly natural.

We are not told exactly of the context for these verses and to what Paul is reacting. We are not told exactly what the Thessalonians specifically asked the apostle Paul.

In the verses that we have just read is Paul's answer and reassurance to them. This passage does not answer all questions that we may have about death but certainly, it gives us true hope. Death is not the final answer.

For most of us, this sermon will be a review of the hope that we have in Jesus Christ concerning the gift of eternal life.



“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.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13 (ESV)



The apostle Paul is not writing to the whole of society here. He is writing to this very young church. He uses their language. In their society, death was seen as sleep.

He wants to inform them about death so that they will not grieve like people who have no hope.

It must be highlighted here that Paul is not telling these young Christians not to grieve but to grieve with hope.

Death is an enemy. When we lose someone who is dear to us, we hurt. Everybody is different so we grieve differently but we grieve.

Grieving the loss of a loved one is not a sign of weakness. We are to acknowledge it for what it is. Death is an enemy. When someone we love dearly dies, we hurt deeply.

Some of the most difficult types of grieving are the loss of a loved one such as a wife, children or parent. When we lose someone who is not as close, the grief is not as intense.

When we have hope in Christ, the hope of the resurrection takes the edge off of the pain but the pain is still present.

Stages of Dealing with Grief ([Written by Gerry Trickle](http://faith.altbush.com/articles/grief) from <http://faith.altbush.com/articles/grief>)

The following is an excerpt from a web-page article “The Stages of Dealing with Grief”. You can certainly find other models for the stages of grief. None of them are perfect:

- The reality is that you don’t process grief in a simple linear fashion, moving from one stage to the next. All of the stages are present simultaneously. However one (or more) set of emotions seem to predominate at any given moment.
- Models are rational; grief is not.
- Above all, you never self-analyze what is going on (“Oh, I’m in Stage 5!”) and you never believe that you’ll ever get beyond where you are at that moment. ... There are certain stages of grief.

Shock—Immediately following the death of a loved one it is difficult to accept the loss. A feeling of unreality occurs. During those first days and through any religious rituals or memorials there is a feeling of being-out-of-touch.

Emotional Release—the awareness of just how dreadful the loss is accompanied by intense pangs of grief. In this stage a grieving individuals sleeps badly and weeps uncontrollably

Panic—For some time a grieving person can feel in the grip of mental instability. They can find themselves wandering around aimlessly, forgetting things, and not being able to finish what they started. Physical symptoms also can appear -- tightness in the throat, heaviness in the chest, an empty feeling in the stomach, tiredness and fatigue, headaches, migraine headaches, gastric and bowel upsets.

Guilt—At this stage an individual can begin to feel guilty about failures to do enough for the deceased, guilt over what happened or what didn’t happen.

Hostility—Some individuals feel anger at what “caused” the loss of the loved one.

Inability to Resume Business-as-Usual Activities - the ability to concentrate on day-to-day activities may be severely limited. It is important to know and recognize that this is a normal phenomenon. A grieving person’s entire being—emotional, physical and spiritual, is focused on the loss that just occurred.

Grief is a 100% experience. No one does it at 50%.

Reconciliation of Grief—balance in life returns little by little, much like healing from a severe physical wound. There are no set timeframes for healing. Each individual is different.

Hope—the sharp, ever present pain of grief will lessen and hope for a continued, yet different life emerges. Plans are made for the future and the individual is able to move forward in life with good feelings knowing they will always remember and have memories of the loved one.

[Written by Gerry Trickle](#)



“For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.”

1 Thessalonians 4:14 (ESV)



Death is a very personal matter. We all have to face it individually whether we are a Christian or not.

No one will do it for us.

All human beings alive before the return of Jesus will experience it.

It does not matter which term we use to describe it, physical death is physical death. It is the end of our physical existence.

When someone dies in our contemporary society, we sometimes say that he has “passed away”. One site on the Internet lists 101 euphemism or metaphors to describe death!

- Bit the dust
- Bought a one-way ticket
- Breathed his/her last
- Called to Christ/Our Lord
- Cashed in (*or “out”*)
- Checked into the Motel Deep 6

- Climbed the stairway to heaven
- Crossed the Great Divide
- Deceased
- Entered eternal rest
- Entered the Pearly Gates
- Entered the Sweet Hereafter, etc.

One of the analogies that they used for death in the first century was “sleep” as they actually thought that death was a forever sleep without end. In that pagan society, resurrection was not even thought of.

History tells us that Jesus lived on the earth in the beginning of the first century. There are several historical records that acknowledge it. To know that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God come from heaven, we need God to reveal it to us.

Jesus is that revelation from heaven. The book of Hebrews makes that very clear. **“1 ¶ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” (Heb 1:1-2 ESV)**

We could not know that Jesus is God incarnate, Emmanuel with us, without revelation from God.

The epistle to the first Corinthians which was written a few years after in about AD 55 to AD 56, the apostle Paul goes in a greater length to describe the resurrection.

It is by faith that we believe what the apostle Paul wrote because no one has ever experienced the resurrection except Jesus Christ who is the firstborn among many brethren.

The resurrection of our physical body to immortality will be a big event.

“20 ¶ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1Co 15:20-22 ESV)



Everyone dies because of the sin of Adam. Everyone will be made alive because of Jesus’ victory over sin and death by his perfect human life, his death on the cross, his resurrection and his ascension to heaven.

The Bible talks about a general resurrection. There is a lot we don’t know about what will happen at the resurrection of the dead. The apostle Paul explains that our physical bodies which will be changed to spiritual human bodies. Our spiritual human bodies will be the same as of the man Jesus. (Next slide – 1 Cor 15:42-49)

“42 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.

43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.

44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

45 Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:42-49 ESV



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46 But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.

47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.

48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.

49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”

1 Corinthians 15:42-49 ESV



It is also very clear that eternal life can only be received as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ, as we read in the book of Acts.

To use an analogy, Jesus has paid the ticket to eternal life for everyone. We must receive the ticket purchase by Jesus' blood to receive this gift. It is a gift that cannot be worked for but only received.

(next slide continues from 1st Corinthians 15)

“23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” (1Co 15:23-26 ESV)



The resurrection our physical body will be a gigantic and fantastic event!

It will be a world transforming event. We have the privileged of being called now to receive this awesome revelation.

The Bible makes it very clear that we do not know when the return of Jesus will be. We are told that he will come as a thief in the night. He will return to the earth, unexpectedly. He will establish peace on the earth.

The called-out ones, the church, are part of the firstfruits of God’s harvest. What does it mean for us?



“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”

2 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)



What are some of the blessings of being part of the firstfruits of God’s harvest?

We will look at a few without elaborating. It will help us to meditate about God’s great calling of his church now.

“16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 ¶ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Romans 8:16-17 (ESV)



- 1 – We are children of God;
- 2 – Heirs of God,
- 3- Fellow heirs/inheritors with Jesus.
- 4- We will be glorified with Jesus.

We must persevere and cherish the free gift given to us that we are in relationship with Jesus now. Being in relationship with Jesus, we are also in relationship with God the Father by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus has inherited everything until he returns the whole of God’s creation to God the Father after the destruction of every rule in every authority and every power. He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, the last enemy to be destroyed is death. We will participate in Christ in that work.

We don’t know exactly all of what that means but we know we will participate in a “beyond words” work.

“5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Revelations 1:5-6 (ESV)



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(Next slide)

“9 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.””

Revelations 5:9-10 (ESV)



“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1Pe 2:9 ESV)

Because Jesus is King and our perfect high priest, in him we are made royalty and priests! Our reign will be on the earth where Jesus returns. What all that means, we await to see in faith. This is what lies beyond our horizon!

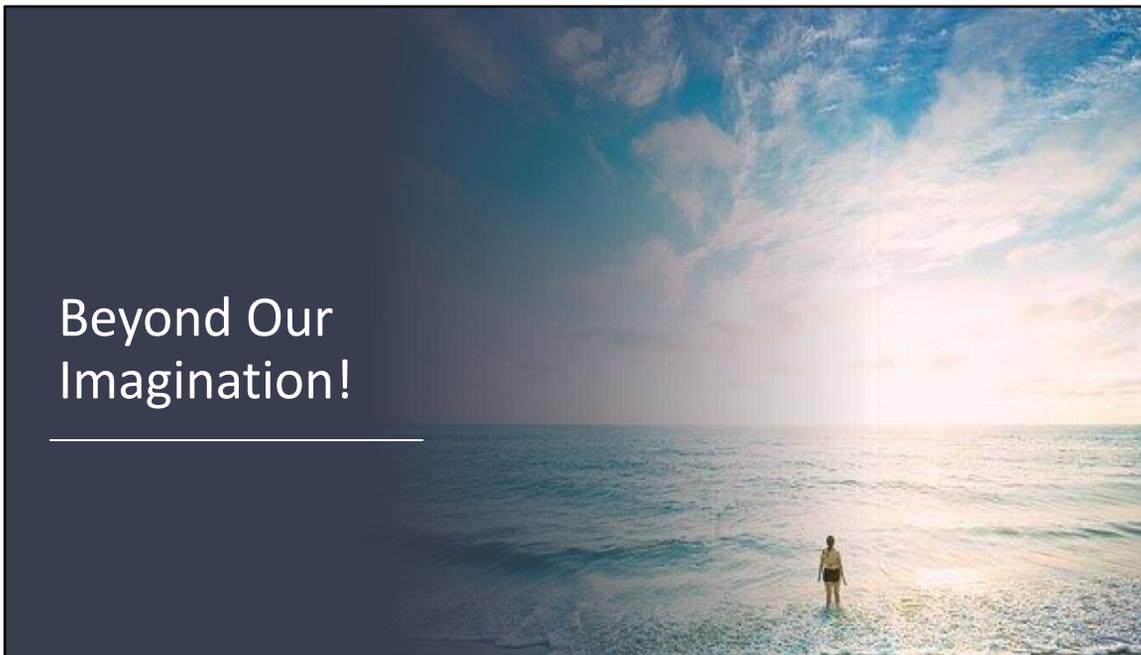
Our calling is beyond what we can imagine!

“Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!”

1 Corinthians 6:3 (ESV)



Beyond Our Imagination!



We will judge angels! What that means, the Bible does not elaborate but it means that in Christ we will be elevated above the angels.

Our calling is beyond human words. Although we only see through a glass darkly, we are told enough that what lies beyond the horizon united to Jesus Christ is beyond our wildest imagination.

“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.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (ESV)



Let us encourage one another with this is great hope of a fantastic, beyond human imagination future!

We are on the short journey to a magnificent and upcoming future. Let us persevere in our relationship with God united to Christ, our perfect High Priest, Mediator and Saviour!

Let us pray in thanksgiving, awe and adoration.