

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 “We Have Hope” 11/14-16/2020**  
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***1 Thessalonians 4:13-18***

**<sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. <sup>15</sup> According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage one another with these words.**

***Introduction***

For what do you have hope? That Covid-19 will go away? That we will have a snowy Christmas? That you will be healthy, wealthy, and wise in 2021? These are hopes that are uncertain and for which we have no guarantees. The Apostle Paul, however, in the verses we consider today talks about a hope that is certain. As a result, we can say with confidence on this Saints Triumphant weekend: **We Have Hope!**

***Those Who Don’t***

Paul mentioned those who had no hope. They were ignorant of important things dealing with life after death. Most people in Greece and Roman Empire believed that there was no future for the body after death. When it died, that’s it! In respect to souls, some believed that the souls of the dead went to the underworld where they would spend a gloomy eternity. Others believed in a more festive future in the Elysian fields for those who were especially good and in a place of suffering called Tartarus for the bad. Still others believed that at death all existence stopped. They had no hope!

It seems that some ignorance affected the Thessalonians. There was misunderstanding about Jesus’ return. Some thought that those who died would not be a part of Jesus’ return and would not enjoy the resurrection of the body.

The same is true of many people today. Many have little or no hope when dealing with death. Many believe that when you’re dead, that’s it. If one believes in reincarnation, you may hope for life after death but there is no assurance that in your next life you won’t return as a grub worm or mosquito. There are those who believe in life after death, but that you to have anything good in eternity, you had better be a super person in time. There are those who believe in spiritual life after death, but nothing physical. All, in the end, lack hope.

Are you among them? Maybe you are ignorant about what the Bible says about life after death, Jesus’ return, and the resurrection of the body. Maybe you weren’t listening when you had it in class. Maybe you never had it. Maybe you learned the truth of God’s word but since then you bought into philosophies that seem to be more “modern” than what you learned from God’s Word. But these philosophies offer no real hope and comfort. Or maybe you know God’s Word, but your sinful nature has risen up in sinful doubt and denial. And now when you deal with death, you grieve as those who have little or no hope .... To you God, through Paul, calls, as he did to the Thessalonians, “We have hope!”

### ***We Grieve, but not as Those Who Have No Hope***

Through Paul God said, *“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.”* (v.13)

God doesn't say we Christians shouldn't grieve. Sorrow is not a sin. Tears are not a trespass. Grieving is not a reason for guilt. Jesus went to Bethany and grieved with Mary and Martha over the death of their brother Lazarus. It is okay to grieve the death of those whom we love. As a matter of fact, we need to grieve. But God says he doesn't want us to grieve as those who have no hope.

### ***We Have Hope***

In verses 14 to 17 Paul reminds and reassures us of the reasons we have for hope. First Paul wrote, *“We believe that Jesus died and rose again...”* That Jesus died and rose again is so important because it's on this fact that our peace with God and our hope of eternal life rests. If Jesus, the sinless Son of God, didn't die for our sins and then rise to assure us that he did finish everything that needed to be taken care of, there would be no hope. We would have no forgiveness and no way to eternal life. But Jesus did rise. Our sin is paid for. God has forgiven us. Jesus has brought eternal life. All this is ours through faith in Jesus.

The second reason for our hope is that we have a living Lord who will return in glory on the Last Day. <sup>14</sup>*For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.* <sup>15</sup>*According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.* <sup>16</sup>*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.* (v.14-16) Because of this fact, when Christians die, it is as a sleep for the body because that body will wake up on the Last Day. But at death the soul goes to be with the Lord in perfect peace and happiness.

When Jesus comes in glory, God will bring with Jesus the souls of those whose bodies have died. Paul wrote that Jesus will return with a loud command. To the living the Lord's command will be a “head's up!” To the dead it will be a “wake up!”

There will also be the voice of the archangel. In Jude 9 Michael is mentioned as the archangel; in Daniel 12, “the great prince who protects your people;” and in Revelation, as “Michael and his angels.” There will be the trumpet call of God.

When Jesus comes in glory... everyone will see him, even the dead for their bodies will rise from death. What the bodies of unbelievers will be like, I don't know. But bodies of believers will be glorified. Paul wrote to the Philippians, *“...like Jesus glorified body.”* Those bodies won't have braces, glasses, canes, or walkers. The fingers gnarled by arthritis will be straight; the limbs shriveled by polio or stroke, will be strong and whole; minds affected by dementia, will be sharp. Those who have died will experience a reunion of glorified body and glorified soul and will be caught up to meet the Lord in the sky.

In v. 17 Paul gives a third reason for our hope, *“After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”* We won't be left behind. Jesus will glorify our bodies like those believers whose bodies he raised. We too will be caught up to meet the Lord in the sky.

### ***We Can Be Sure***

How can we be sure? Reason #4 - this is *"according to the Lord's own word."*(v15). You can trust what Paul wrote because this is the Word of the Lord who is so loving and faithful that right after the Fall of humankind into sin, God promised a Savior and then at the right time sent His own Son to be the Savior ... to live a holy life in our place ... to die a horrible death for our sins ... that we have life ...peace ... resurrection ...and the glory of eternal life. As a result of what Christ will do for others who have died in the Lord and for us who believe in the Lord, as we experience the death of loved ones or face the reality of our own death, we may find ourselves down, but we are not out.

### ***Encourage One Another!***

*"Therefore, encourage each other with these words."* Parents, when grandpa dies, don't tell your kids that grandpa went away. Tell them about how that body in the casket no longer lives but the soul now lives with Jesus and is very happy. Tell your children about the fact that Jesus will come in glory grandma and grandpa will rise with healthy and whole bodies. Encourage each other.

When your friend loses a loved one, it's kind to say, "My sympathy to you." But to the person mourning the loss of a Christian loved one, how comforting it may be to go on to say, "And I rejoice that he/she is with Jesus. On the last day Jesus will raise this body so that it too experiences the joy his/her soul enjoys right now." If your friend's loved one was not a Christian, a fact that is sad, while we can't change the eternal destiny of the deceased and can't offer the hope of eternal life, we can still tell that mourning friend, "I'll pray for you. Jesus, who died and rose again, promises to be with those who trust in him and help them in their struggles." Encourage them.

When you encounter someone struggling with problems that seem to never end, encourage them with the news that Jesus who died, rose again and rules for his people. He will help and bless those who turn to him. Then offer the hope and the comfort that comes with the fact that Jesus will come again in glory to deliver us from all evil. You can do this because have hope! Amen. (DRS)