



Help for the Journey: Sermon Resources and References

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Resurrection Hope
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Why does theology matter? What difference does the Good News of Jesus make when we lose a loved one? How does it affect our grief and our hope? How can we encourage one another? Paul addresses some of these issues as he explains the future return of Christ. What we'll see is something more attractive and more practical than what many of us have heard about the End Times.

Central Text:

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. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 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. 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. 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. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (ESV)

Further Reading:

[Desiring God Blog Post by John Piper: Suffering and the Second Coming](#)

[Book: O Love That Will Not Let Me Go: Facing Death with Courageous Confidence in God](#)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Paul is correcting and refining their theology of the Second Coming here. What attitudes about theology have you encountered or experienced from others or found in yourself?
2. Is the study of God and doctrine important? Why or why not? How were the Thessalonians' beliefs about the Second Coming or return of Christ affecting their lives when it came to working (see the previous passage) and death (this passage)? How has your life been affected in these areas by what you are really believing? Do you think there's a difference between head belief (right answers) and heart belief (where your confidence actually rests)?
3. Paul says we don't grieve like those with no hope. What do you think it is like to grieve the loss of loved ones without the hope of Christ yourself? What difference does the Good News make for you as you encounter death?
4. Although we are hopeful, Paul does not say we don't or should not grieve -- just that it is different. Have you experienced ways in which Christians have either minimized either the hope or the grief? Why is it powerful, healthy and attractive that the Gospel enables both? Give examples from the life and teaching of Jesus that support the same truth.

5. The Thessalonians' grief and anxiety was fed by false ideas about the end times and second coming. What were those fears and how does Paul correct them?
6. What ideas have you been exposed to about the return of Christ and end times and how have you felt about it? What is more attractive about Paul's teaching and approach? Do you find hope for yourself in this passage?

Gospel Practice:

Paul ends the passage with a practical challenge to encourage one another with these things. Death is wrapped in hope. None of the faithful will miss the glory and healing of the end time and the new beginning. We will be with the Lord forever. Christ loves His people and will come back to get us one day. Meditate on how this passage offers Good News and encouragement to your soul. Pray for the Spirit to help you see opportunities to encourage someone. Who in your path might need their faith strengthened?

Consider someone you know who has recently lost a loved one. Give that person a call or a visit.



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