

Sermon Group Discussion Questions

Center Point Church

Sermon Summary

The sermon titled "Eternal Consolation" delivered by Pastor Aaron Barnett, offers hope and strength to those mourning the loss of a loved one. Focused on the passage from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, the sermon sequences Paul's correspondence with the grieving church in Thessalonica, highlighting their undervaluing predicament of their dearly departed. The sermon delineates the distinct hope Christians possess because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just as Christ rose again, so will the beloved departed, and this hope assures believers of an eternal life with God. Paul's words highlight the significance of understanding and knowledge about the truth of resurrection - a key distinction from worldly interpretations of grief. The sermon invokes the congregation to break free from worldly narratives and to put their trust and hope in Christ. Pointing towards the inevitable letdown of chasing earthly comforts and desires compared to the everlasting fulfillment Christ can provide, it emphasizes the contrasts between believers and non-believers. The sermon concludes with a poem celebrating believers' victory in Jesus and their impending glory, reinforcing that for followers of Christ, death is not the end. In short, the sermon comprehensively communicates that believers in Christ should not grieve like those who do not know Him. Their faith in Jesus and His resurrection act as the firm foundation of their hope. In view of life's fleeting nature, they must continually renew their thoughts and embrace Christ as their sole solace. The sermon is an affirmation of the robust hope followers of Christ have in life and of their reunion with those who have moved on, in eternity, all fueled by their confidence in Jesus. It serves as a heartfelt reminder to find comfort in Jesus, especially in grief and loss, further solidifying this belief and prompting a renewal of thought to live in the hope and certainty in Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. How does a believer's hope in Jesus help them grieve differently?

In the sermon, it was mentioned that believers should not grieve like unbelievers because they have a different hope in Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

In your own life, how can you find hope in Jesus during difficult times of grief and loss?

2. What is the foundation of our hope as Christians, and why is it so important?

According to the sermon, the foundation of our hope is our belief in Jesus' death and resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

How does knowing that Jesus conquered death impact your daily life and decisions?

3. In what ways can we renew our minds and place our hope in Christ alone?

The sermon taught that Christians must renew their minds, remember the brevity of life, and rest in Christ alone (Romans 12:1-2).

What practical steps can you take to keep your focus on Jesus and not be influenced by worldly thinking?

4. How does the resurrection of believers provide them with eternal consolation?

Pastor Aaron emphasized that believers have a firm hope in Christ, who will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

What can you do to remind yourself and encourage others of this guarantee of eternal consolation?

5. Why can't earthly comforts and desires fully satisfy us, and how can we find true consolation in Christ?

The sermon mentioned that earthly comforts and desires cannot fully satisfy, but Christ alone can bring true consolation (Matthew 5:4).

In what areas of your life are you seeking temporary satisfaction, and how can you turn to Christ for true fulfillment?

Sermon Transcript

For those of you who don't know, my name is Aaron Barnett. I'm one of the elders, an associate pastor here at Center Point, and I am thrilled to see you this morning, and I'm honored to get to be here. I'm going to be picking up where pastor Tyler left off in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

We're going to pick up where Tyler left off. As I said, we're going to be covering two verses, chapter four, verses 13 and 14. But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others who do not have 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. Paul was writing to these brothers, to this church in Thessalonica that he had been to. He had visited. He knew them, he had relationships.

For various reasons, he had been detained and could not come back to visit them. And he had heard through another brother who was there visiting with them, who reported that they're struggling in one specific area. And Paul is writing to them in this section because he loved them, he cared for them, and he wants what's best for them. If you go back and you read the first few chapters of 1 Thessalonians, Paul mentions that he is like a mother caring for his kids or her children. That's how he feels about these believers in this city.

He also says, you are my joy, my glory. He feels like the people that he has discipled, that he has lovingly shared the gospel with, that have come to know Christ through his ministry and

teaching. He loves them dearly, so much so that he said that you are my glory. And my joy when I think about you and all that God is doing in you and through you.

But we get to this point in these verses. God has seen fit to inspire Paul's writings here to be included and recognized as God's word, which means it's also for us today. And I think it's because, as we will see here, it's very possible for God fearing followers of Christ to have unsound, inaccurate beliefs that result in unsound and unfruitful living.

First thing I want to say is this, that in verse 13 we do not want you to be uninformed. To brothers. If you read the Niv, it says, brothers and sisters, we don't want you to be uninformed. The tone is he's caring for them and what's going on in their life. It's not about fear of they're not saved.

He's not concerned for their souls. He's concerned for their lifestyle and what is going on right now while they're grieving, specifically the loss of some friends, potentially family, brothers and sisters in Christ who have died. He sees them grieving in a way that is not fitting for believers.

For one reason or another, they were unknowingly and unneedfully sorrowful over the death of loved ones. We don't know who or how long it's been. All of the details really don't matter. Paul's encouragement and consolation for them is rich.

This section of Paul's letter is aimed at encouraging them, and what Paul does to encourage them is correcting their thinking and their understanding. He references them as family, adopted siblings in the family of God, brothers and sisters. And then he says, I don't want you to be uninformed. He could tell that based on what they were doing in their life, their thinking is off. There's something crucial that they're missing that's displaying itself in how they're grieving.

Paul knows that actions, choices, and life flows from thinking and beliefs. And Paul confidently addresses the wrong beliefs because of how they were acting. In verse 13, it says that you may not grieve as others who do not have hope.

Knowledge informs belief, and belief determines hope. There's a glorious truth that they were missing that was hurting them, and he wants to correct it because he cares for them. Knowledge about something helps us know what to believe and to trust. We can choose what we believe and do. Sometimes in life, the more knowledge and understanding we have, the better we can place our hope and expectations in whatever that is, our joy and our peace are tied to what we hope for, though, which is something that I want to get to as we continue.

Charles Spurgeon said, the more we Christians know of our religion, the better for our peace and happiness.

That's also why in Romans twelve, one and two it says, don't conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Our minds, where our thinking happens, where our understanding takes place of things, is where faith is born and produced. And that's why God has given us this so we can understand and we can trust these new converts in Christ relatively in Thessalonica. Consider this. They are living off of the hope they've received through the gospel message preached to them by Paul.

They didn't have all of the New Testament to hold to. They didn't have all of the truth that we do to hold, to, to understand, to read, to study. They didn't have systematic theology, books or

libraries of God's word like we do. It appears that others had come in to teach something unorthodox, unsound, unbiblical to them that caused them to misplace their hope and trust, specifically in relationship to what happens to people who have passed away, brothers and sisters, in relation to when Christ comes back again in the Old Testament. If you read your Bible, the Old Testament, I'm going to sum up very, very, I'm going to generalize here.

The Old Testament is all about God's chosen people trying to obey and follow his commands, to live in a way that pleases him, that he wants. But if you go to the Old Testament and you read what we see over and over and over, is that God's people are foolish and disobedient and do what they want instead of what God wants. And we see put on display in the Old Testament God's faithfulness again and again and again and again. But what I'm trying to make a point here with the Old Testament is one thing that they continuously did is they forgot God. They forgot what God said, they forgot what God wanted, they forgot what he commanded.

Or other times they just straight up disagreed and didn't want to do it. When they knew and remembered and acted on God's character, his promises and his commands, things went really well for them. God blessed them. When they did what they want, things really went bad for them. There were consequences. The whole time he stayed faithful to his promises, to his people. Praise God.

We are no different. And I think Thessalonians, it's putting on display the same thing when Paul says that I don't want you to be uninformed. I don't want you to be uninformed. We shouldn't want each other to be uninformed. On crucial doctrines and teaching from God's word. That's going to drastically affect our hope and trust in God. Christians have hope in life and in death.

Paul firstly, encourages them with the family greeting, as I said, brothers and sisters, and then on the encouragement and the importance of hope in the loss of life in the face of grief. Specifically, they were very sorrowful. More specifically, he reminds them briefly to see themselves as separate and different from the rest of mankind. In the Old Testament, one of the things that God repeatedly told his people, the Israelites, don't be like all of the other people that you see yourself surrounded by. Don't follow their politics, don't follow their beliefs and religious practices.

You are going to be separate and different than everybody else. That's partially why he gave them all of the rules, the commands, the laws that he set them apart by was to mark them as believers.

We're to be different. Also, in chapter four, verse five, a few verses earlier, Paul was admonishing them to stay pure in their sexual conduct. Paul says, don't act in a way like the pagans who don't know God. He's implying, you do know God. Don't act like them.

You're supposed to be different. It's very similar in this verse. Here there is a contrast between those who know God and those who don't. My first point is this. **The people of God should grieve differently than the rest of mankind.**

One of the most tangible differences between believers and unbelievers is their quantity and quality of their hope in life. Humans can find all sorts of things to console, encourage and nourish themselves.

Not all of them are sinful or wrong. Some of these things are good gifts from God. But for unbelievers, it's idolatry, because they have to look to things that are created instead of the creator.

Many of these things in life people will look to, they'll protect, they'll cultivate and cherish these things. The world offers so many things that people can place their identity in. None of them are sound and stable. Though in regard to eternity, people still base their lives on them, place their hopes in them. Their expectations are built around them.

It's this life only, though where they will find hope. When it comes to death, none of these things are of any help. When eternity calls, there is no temporary thing which people can be saved by. Christians should be different, because they should hold to something much greater than temporary, earthly things.

Those of us who believe know this. God is the only one to be worshipped. He alone is sound and stable. He has reward for now and eternity. Praise God.

It's a stark contrast between believers and unbelievers. The Thessalonians were sorrowful and grieving like non believers, like they had no hope. And Paul is going to put his finger on something that is absolutely crucial and essential to our hope, our trust, our faith, the foundation of us being believers.

Those who do not know God only have hope in this life. **We Christians have hope in life and in death.** We need this hope. We need this text. If not now, then soon enough you will. Death is inescapable for family and friends. Fear for yourself. Sickness, tragedy.

On January 14, the last time that I preached, those of you who are here, I found out right before I came up on stage that a dear friend had died that night. Many of you also know you knew her. You know the family. Grieving is not easy. It's not going to be. But this side of heaven, it's necessary, because it's going to happen. Those of you here who have lost, who have grieved, who are grieving, to have hope is everything. To have hope is everything.

It's only once you're in desperation that you'll find yourself questioning things, that hope alone has the power to help and aid. It is only when you have so emotionally strained that all you hope, or all you have left is hope to cling to. We, as people naturally, want to just be strong. When all your strength is taken away, what do you hold to?

It is those who are properly informed, who can grieve and mourn, all the while holding on to the God who will comfort them. Other things cannot comfort. They will merely distract, temporarily, which will look like comfort, which might feel like comfort. But it's not really.

Those who are uninformed are like the Thessalonians. They grieve, yes, but are at a loss or grasping for things to give hope, but falling short. And Paul is saying, we have hope, and I can see that you're not holding to it.

Make no mistake, though. God does not want us to be calloused and unemotional. It would be cold and ungodly and unchrist like to be without emotion in the face of loss. When Jesus' friend Lazarus died, Jesus wept. He knew he was going to be raised from the dead, and he still wept. It is Christ like to mourn.

It is precisely in the midst of pain and emotion, where hope lives. And that is also where comfort, holy comfort, is found. Which is why in the sermon on the mount, Jesus said, blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. There is a comfort that God wants to give that only can be received in times of desperation and loss and grief.

In times of grief, hope determines what we do. And in times of grief, hope determines how we mourn. Hope is what we expect. Expectations can be extremely powerful. They can cause us to plan, purchase, desire, fear.

Think of worldly things like vacations, family get togethers, birthday parties. Expectations determine what we do, how we plan, what we look to as a child. And even still, I find myself hoping for things purely out of my desires sometimes, which could be really wrong. And sometimes it's not. It's not bad to want things. God gives us desires, but that's not really hope. That's just wishful thinking. Hope is more of a confidence based on what we know to be true. To want something is not bad, but to know you're going to get something is entirely different. I have beautiful family. I've been blessed with a wonderful wife, three daughters, and a son. I watch a lot of Disney movies. I don't know where you stand on that.

There's a number of things that bother me about Disney, but that's another conversation. But one thing in particular I will say is there's often a theme of, you're going to get what you wish for, and that's just a lie. It's not true. You can want something so bad. Doesn't mean you're going to get it. Makes for a fun story. But we as Christians have to be careful, because that's not what our hope is. It is something so much better than that.

Sorry. Such a sad thing when someone hopes and dreams in this life, and then they're shattered. There's consolation in the fact, though, that they can try again. You can do something different. You have time. But when it comes to death, when time runs out, you're faced with a big question mark. Unless you have hope.

Proper hope. The Thessalonians were believing, like the rest of the world, that their friends and family loved ones had been buried and they were gone, and they were never going to see them again. Relationally, they thought they were gone for eternity. If that were true, man, we should be sorrowful. But praise God, it's not those who are unbelievers.

Their hopes do die in the grave, and it's tragic. But for believers, what an awesome dose of medicine. It is to hear that in Christ they're only sleeping. We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers. That those who are asleep.

About those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others who do not have hope. It's a picture. It's a picture of they're just sleeping. They're going to wake up. It's actually a common analogy that was used for death.

People have fallen asleep. I believe that's actually the root of where we get the word cemetery. I might be wrong on that, but I believe I read that somewhere. There's something that happens after this life, after people die.

Don't be uninformed about those who are asleep. Family, brothers, and sisters, know this and be informed. Place your hope in this. They are but sleeping. You will see them again.

The resurrection of those who have gone before us is as sure and sound. Let me tell you why our world believes. Those who mourn do so because they've lost hope. That's why you mourn.

Did Christ lose hope when Lazarus died? Is that why he mourned and wept? No. It's because we're created in God's image as relational beings, and it hurts when we lose somebody.

My next point. **Christ's resurrection is the surest anchor for our hope.**

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.

The basis for which we hope in death is faith in Jesus Christ, specifically the fact that he is not dead. He rose from the grave. That means that Jesus is who he says he is. That means he is the son of God who came to take away our sin. That means he is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies and promises about a coming messiah.

He is it. And that means that he has the power to do everything he has promised to do. And that means he has accomplished the mission of paying our way into right standing before a holy God. And that means that anyone who is in Christ will surely be resurrected the same as he was, because we are one with him. And that means for all of eternity after death, all those in Christ will be together with him.

The same spirit of God who raised Jesus from the grave is the same spirit living in us who will raise us and all those who have gone before. Praise God.

Flip over quickly if you want, or just follow along. 1 Corinthians 15 in verse twelve, one Corinthians 15. This is not an uncommon theological struggle for people. Specifically, in the New Testament times we read, people struggled with the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of other believers. There was confusion. To be honest, there's still confusion that people have today. Paul is writing to the Corinthians about the same thing that they're wrestling with, or very similar.

It's an uninformed, a lack of knowledge about the truth of the resurrection. And Paul is going to paint here why it is absolutely crucial to understand. It's why when we sang that last song, there's people that are being verbal and hands are going up, and we talk about Christ raising from the dead. It means everything.

Starting in verse twelve of 1 Corinthians 15. Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testify about God that he raised Christ whom he did not raise.

If it is true that he did not raise. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins, then those who also have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only we are of all people most to be pitied. If Jesus Christ did not raise from the grave, then our religion falls apart and we're fools.

Verse 20. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. Christ is the head he raised, and so will the rest of the body.

There is a sure connection between Christ and his people. Our belief about these things, our understanding about being informed on these things, strengthens and solidifies our hope. We have more than hope. We have faith, a confident expectation because of what we believe.

Hope fixed to sound belief, will produce a response that is an act of faith. God honoring, soul satisfying faith. That is why, in the midst of suffering, Christian's grief, loss of life, Christians hold to the truth of who God is and what he has done and why their soul can still be satisfied where everything else aches.

That is what God wants from us. Paul is reminding the Thessalonians of this. They had forgotten about the key elements of our faith, the first thing that broke in the garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned is relationship with God and each other. One of the things that Jesus died to redeem is going to be a reunion relationally with him and others. We must not forget. We must not be uninformed. Christians have hope in life and in death, and we will see our brothers and sisters again, praise God.

But it's not yet. It's not yet. While we wait, while we're trapped, stuck here, we speak, we live, we believe, we hope, and we trust that Christ will raise us up. We love others, and we encourage, we console because we have his spirit inside us. We know that he lives, and so shall those who are in Christ. We look to the things that are unseen, not the things that are seen.

If you're here and you don't know Christ, you can place your hope in him. Today I want to compel you. I want to implore you that while today is still today, you have time, but you're not guaranteed anymore, nor are your friends and family. Death often comes as a surprise.

Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth to give himself as a payment on your behalf. The payment is for all of your sin, all of it, which makes you right before a holy God. And he rose again to confirm and seal the victory over death and the enemy. In Romans ten nine, it says, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord. A lot of people know that part.

And believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Consider yourself informed. It's now your choice to believe or not, and I implore you to make that choice today. You can. Don't wait while you still have time.

Look to Christ. You can be made clean by Christ's blood. His perfect life can be credited to you. He wants it to. That's why he did everything he did.

That is why he made him, who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Confess your sin to him. Cry out for forgiveness. Repent. Accept what Christ has done for you. **Gospel application**, Tyler. You'd be proud of me. I've got three r's. **Renew your mind.**

You, like all of the Israelites in the Old Testament, are prone to forget. You're prone to be distracted. I am prone to forget. I do forget. I do get distracted. We have to renew our minds. We have to be in this. We have to know this. We have to study this. We have to eat this metaphorically.

It's what meditating is. Chewing on it, trying to understand it. That's how we will know how to live life, especially in the face of grief and sorrow from the loss of loved ones. Seek to grow your knowledge and strengthen your grip on what you believe. The second thing is, **remember that this life is short.**

Most people go through their life with hopes and expectations for everything in the future. You're not guaranteed the future. It's always somebody else. It's always somebody else. It's always somebody else that you hear about in the news, somebody that passes away until it's not, and it's you.

Do not think that you've got time. Don't assume life is but a vapor, a flower that fades, tear, and then it's gone. The flowers are blooming right now. They're going to be gone quick. They're pretty.

We enjoy them, but they're going to be gone. Renew your mind. Remember that this life is short. And the third one. **Rest in Christ alone.** Don't look to things for consolation. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Look to Christ. Don't settle for earthly comfort. Settle for soul comfort. That's hard. It's really easy to want to go to things that will immediately make you feel good. You'll always be left wanting more. Christ alone can satisfy. Renew your mind. Remember that this life is short. And rest in Christ.

About a month, six weeks. Still grieving, if I'm being honest. The loss of my friend, family. I know them well. Many of you do, too. I've witnessed what it looks like for believers to mourn and to have hope.

It doesn't make sense for people who are broken. All of life has changed, but they're holding onto something. They've got something that can't be taken, and it gives us power to move forward while we wait, we can still feel. We can still cry. Sometimes it feels good to cry. Yeah.

If you're here grieving, I pray that God meets you and comforts you, consoles you, and he wraps his arms around you. Hold tightly to what you know to be true. Fill up now, because times of loss are going to come, and you're only going to be able to hold to that which you fill up with now before it happens.

Last part of first Thessalonians verse 14. Even so, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. Jesus said, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself. That where I am, there you may be also.

We can live this life, and we can enjoy it. And we can have hope in it with our families, with our friends, with our church body, and we can have hope even in the face of death, because we know eternity is secure.

I'm going to end by reading a poem by a German dude from the 17 hundreds. I'm going to try to get through it. Jesus lives and so shall I. Death, thy sting is gone forever. He who dined for me to die, lives the band of death to sever. He shall raise me with the just. Jesus is my hope and trust.

Jesus lives and reigns supreme and his kingdom still remaining. I shall also be with him ever living, ever reigning God has promised be it must. Jesus is my hope and trust. Jesus lives and

God extends grace to each returning sinner rebels he receives as friends and exalts to highest honor. God is true as he is just.

Jesus is my hope and trust. Jesus lives and by his grace, victory or my passions giving, I will cleanse my heart and ways ever to his glory. Living the weak he raises from the dust. Jesus is my hope and trust. Jesus lives and I am sure not shall err from Jesus sever Satan's wiles and Satan's power, pain or pleasure, ye shall never Christian armor cannot rust.

Jesus is my hope and trust. Jesus lives and death is now but my entrance into glory. Courage then my soul, for thou hast a crown of life before thee. Thou shalt find thy hopes were just. Jesus is the Christian's trust.