

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Introduction

Turn in your copy of God's Word to 1 Thessalonians (page 927 in the Pew Bible).

We are in Week 8 of our sermon series through Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.

- **Background**
 - This NT book is actually a letter written by the Apostle Paul, along with Silvanus and Timothy, to the church at Thessalonica (in northern Greece), which Paul founded during the second of his three missionary journeys.
- We are going to be in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, where we will see a **main idea** that: **Jesus' second coming matter.**

With this in mind, let's read our main passage.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Foundation

Outline:

- (1) 1 Thessalonians 4:13
- (2) 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17
- (3) 1 Thessalonians 4:18

(1) 1 Thessalonians 4:13

- Paul is writing this letter not only to encourage the church, but also to instruct them.
 - As revealed in Acts 17, Paul was run out of Thessalonica and so didn't get to finish instructing them as he wanted.
- 4:13-18 is part of the final encouragement and instruction section that started in 4:1.
 - Two Sunday's ago in 4:1-8, the instruction concerned sanctification and sexual immorality, and last Sunday, as Pastor Aaron beautifully and

faithfully preached how Paul instructed the church concerning brotherly love.

- Today, from 4:13-18 and next Sunday from 5:1-11, Paul's instruction concerns the second coming of Jesus.
- 4:13a
 - Paul doesn't want the church left unformed.
 - Information and knowledge are necessary because ignorance is not always bliss.
 - Often times, what we don't know doesn't bring us joy for not knowing, but puts us in trouble or danger for not knowing it.
 - Ill—Not knowing things.
 - Not knowing the laws of our country doesn't give you a pass from not getting a ticket or getting arrested.
 - Not knowing the policies and procedures of your workplace doesn't give you a pass from potentially be fired from your job.
 - Not knowing the syllabus for your class doesn't give you a pass for missing assignments and failing the class.
 - Alongside this, often having the information and knowledge may not help to change the situation, BUT can help how we cope with and handle it.
 - Paul knew the instruction he was giving to the church wouldn't change the fact that people had died, BUT it would change how the Thessalonians looked at, thought about, and acted toward the death of fellow Christians.
 - Grief for those left behind is natural and healthy.
 - It is not the understanding that the world and less mature Christian's grieve, BUT strong and mature Christians don't because they have outgrown it or know better.

- What Paul wants the church to know is that grieving and hope can happen at the same time.
- John 11 and the death of Lazarus.
 - Jesus grieved when He arrived in Bethany after Lazarus had been dead for four days . . . EVEN though Jesus knew He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead.
 - Jesus modeled grief in death, and we are too follow likewise.
- III—VA Funeral.
 - Pastor started out the funeral sermon of a Christian with, “This is not a time for grief and sorrow, but a time to rejoice, so let’s dry those tears up and celebrate.”
 - That statement is not true and was like one of my jokes . . . it had poor timing and poor execution.
- Christians are to grieve the loss of fellow Christians, and how they grieve matters, because they grieve with the hope of knowing their fellow Christians are not forgotten but they are currently in the presence of Jesus now, will return with Him at His second coming, and will be with Jesus forevermore.
 - Nothing can or will separate them from Jesus, PERIOD.
- Why?
 - Why do Christians grieve the loss of fellow Christians with hope?
- 4:13b

- Paul lived with an urgency and imminence as it came to Jesus' second coming, and the Thessalonian church was to follow suit.
 - The apostles in the 1st Century were living looking for Jesus to return during their lifetime, and they taught this to those they disciplined, and Paul was no different.
 - Therefore, Paul lived looking for Jesus to return in his lifetime, and taught those he disciplined to be prepared if Jesus did, so with this perspective, and Paul's lack of time to instruct them, the Thessalonian church was unsure about their fellow Christians that died before Jesus returned.
 - Do they miss out and not get to experience Jesus' return and all that entails?
 - We may not see the big deal with this today because we have the full teaching of God to inform us, and also because of the perspective in which we often live.
 - We live in the here and now, consumed by the here and now, often with little thought about Jesus' return.
 - Reality—when was the last time you thought about Jesus' return? . . . when was the last time you lived a day with urgency because you thought Jesus might return that day?
 - Paul and the Thessalonian church lived in the here and now in light of the second coming of Jesus.
 - Jesus' return was constantly before them.
 - For the Thessalonians, the importance and imminence of Jesus' return made this understanding of what happened to Christians who died before Jesus' returned important, AND know they could grieve, and grieve with hope, mattered.

(2) 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17

- Paul instructs and informs the church concerning this very question in these four verses: “Do Christians who die before Jesus’ return miss out and not experience it?”
 - Simple answer: No, Christians who die before Jesus’ returns will not miss out.
 - Paul fleshes this out and provides the following arguments:
 - (1) the crucifixion and resurrection—4:14a
 - The crux and rez of Jesus was the climax of the biblical story, the climax of human history, and these two events changed everything.
 - They changed how we think about life and death AND how we can experience life and death.
 - The crux and rez provides us an opportunity to experience life differently, the way God initially created as Jesus gives us a new life in exchange for our old one.
 - An abundant life, a life where we decrease and Jesus increases, a life where we die to ourselves so that Jesus lives in us and through us.
 - The crux and rez provides us an opportunity to experience death differently.
 - Yes, we will all one day (if Jesus tarries) close our eyes and breathe our last one last time, and even though we will still face the uncertainty of what death will be like, we do not have to face the uncertainty of what comes after death.

- Romans 6:5—“For if we have been united with him [Jesus] in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”
- Like Jesus, we will experience physical death (unless He returns) BUT also like Jesus, we will not experience spiritual death.
- Paul reminds the church that Jesus’ second coming will change everything, BUT don’t forget that His first coming changed everything as well, especially as it involved the cross and the empty tomb.
- So, Paul instructs the church that NO, Christians who die before Jesus’ return will not miss out because through Jesus and His crux and rez, they will already be experiencing eternal life with Him and will be included once He returns (about to talk).
- (2) the dead and alive—4:14b-17
 - Paul not only instructs the church on those who have died before Jesus returns, but also on those who are still alive when Jesus returns.
 - Dead.
 - When Jesus returns those Christians who have already died won’t miss out and Jesus won’t forget them because He will bring them with Him.
 - When this happens, the physical bodies of the Christians who have died will rise from where they are “asleep” and be reunited with their souls, which

will continue like this for the rest of eternity.

- Alive.
 - When Jesus returns, the Christians who are still alive will go both body and soul to meet Jesus and those with Him, and will continue with Jesus like this for the rest of eternity.
- So, Paul instructs the church that NO, Christians who have died won't miss out on the second coming of Jesus, just like Christians who are alive won't either.
- Interesting note:
 - 4:16—“[Jesus] 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.”
 - Jesus' first coming—quietness, little fanfare, very few knew, humility, child.
 - Jesus' second coming—presence, fanfare, all will know, power, conquering king.
 - Many may have missed Jesus' first coming, but NONE will miss His second.
 - Jesus' first coming was the climax, AND His second coming will be the denouement.
 - Denouement—a literary term meaning “the final part that brings everything together.”
- Jesus is coming back, and it affects both those who are alive and those who have died.

From our time in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, we see a **main idea** that: **Jesus' second coming matters.**

Application

How do we apply this to our lives?

- 1 Thessalonians 4:18

- Main Application—Jesus' second coming matters because it provides Christian's encouragement in life and death.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

- Paul lets the church know they are to encourage each other, and all fellow Christians, with “these words.”
 - “These words” referring to what Paul has just instructed the church about concerning Jesus' second coming (4:13-17).
- We struggle understanding certain things, whether like the Thessalonian church we have never been taught OR because they are just hard to comprehend.
 - This lack of understanding can lead us to discouragement and worries, but knowing the truth can lead to encouragement and hope.
 - III—Advice given to men about to be married.
 - You are about to be tied down, hitched to the ole ball and chain, losing your freedom (whether joking or actually believe it).
 - Rather, the truth is that marriage is not being tied down but experiencing true companionship . . . not being hitched to the ole ball and chain but being connected to a lifelong partner . . . not losing your freedom but gaining a family.
 - For the men God calls to marriage, a biblical marriage is not about lose but about gain, and what encouragement this truth is for men about to be married.
 - A lack of understanding can bring about discouragement, while the truth can bring about encouragement and hope.
- **Two takeaways** from the truth about Jesus' second coming that provides encouragement for Christians:
 - **(1) encouragement in life.**
 - Paul wanted the church to know that Jesus' second coming provides encouragement in life.

- Church Family, Jesus not only provides for us in the here and now, but in the future as well . . . which means we can rely on and trust in Jesus not only for the here and now, but for the future as well.
- What encouragement can we gain in life concerning the truth that Jesus will come again?
 - We are eventually going to meet Jesus face to face and be in His presence forever.
 - Since our salvation, we have longed to be with Jesus, and we have come to know the depths of evil within the world.
 - There are days our longing becomes greater and we find ourselves pondering and praying, “Jesus, how long will you tarry? How much longer until you return? I can’t wait to be with you, and I can’t wait for you to make everything new?”
 - On the days when life can get overwhelming and the evil within the world can cause us to begin to lose hope, we need the encouragement of the Word of God and our fellow Brothers and Sisters to remind us that Jesus is coming back to gather His people, so take heart and find hope that day could be any day.
 - No matter how bad the world gets (and according to the Bible it is going to only get worse and worse), Jesus will eventually return as the conquering king to gather His people who are still alive, reconnect them with those who have already died, and make

everything new and perfect once again (like Genesis 1-2).

- Jesus is coming back a second time, so find encouragement and hope in that truth within your life.
- (2) encouragement in death.
 - Paul wanted the church to know that Jesus' second coming provides encouragement in death.
 - Church Family, Jesus not only provides for us in life, but also in death.
 - We are all born with an expiration date.
 - All advancements within our modern society may help us live longer, but none have made us live forever (and none ever will).
 - III—Bryan Johnson
 - Within the last several years, Time Magazine has ran an article and Netflix has done a documentary on a man name Bryan Johnson.
 - Johnson is a tech entrepreneur whose company acquired Venmo and then sold it for hundreds of millions.
 - And now he is on the quest to live forever.
 - To try and achieve this, he spends about \$2 million each year on this journey, which includes a strict diet and lifestyle, 30+ doctors and health experts, and taking over 100 supplements per day.
 - Johnson will eventually find out and experience, like every human, no amount of money and technology and

desiring will cause him to escape the inevitable: physical death.

- Instead of focusing on trying to evade physical death, Johnson should be focusing on embracing its inevitability and what comes after.
- He should realize he won't live forever physically, BUT he can live forever spiritually.
- Fascinating quote in the Time Magazine article:
 - "If you want immortality, you should go to a church." (Dr. Eric Verdin, CEO of the Buck Institute for Research and Aging).
- Dr. Verdin was on the right track, but missed out on one small but big detail:
 - If you want immortality, you should go to Jesus."
 - As important and necessary as church (we just completed four weeks of Sunday School lessons about it), church didn't die for you, and church can't save you.
 - Only Jesus died for you and only Jesus can save you, and thus only Jesus can provide you with eternal life.
- What encouragement can we gain in death concerning the truth that Jesus will come again?
 - For those who are Christians and have been saved and redeemed by Jesus, death is not the end, and death will not separate us from Jesus.
 - Furthermore, as is found within the context of this passage, death does

not cause us to miss out or not experience the second coming of Jesus because when that glorious and long-awaited day final comes, those who have already died in Christ will come back with Him.

- All the people of God who have ever lived, are living, or will ever live, will experience that day for the majesty and glory and awesomeness that it will be, and even more than this, continue to experience the majesty and glory and awesomeness of Jesus within His presence forevermore after that day as well.
- Jesus is coming back a second time, so find encouragement and hope in that truth as it comes to death.

Challenge/Conclusion

Friends, Jesus' second coming matters, especially as it provides encouragement for life and death.

As we conclude this morning, during our invitation time and your quiet time this week with God, I want us to pray and ponder this reflection question:

- Main Reflection—Where do you find encouragement in life and death, and how should and does Jesus' second coming play a role?
- “Christ Our Hope in Life and Death” by Keith and Kristyn Getty and a team of hymn writers.
 - What is our hope in life and death? . . . Christ alone
Christ alone . . . What is our only confidence? . . .
That our souls to Him belong.
 - Unto the grave, what we will sing? . . . “Christ, He
lives, Christ, He lives!” . . . And what reward will
Heaven bring? . . . Everlasting life with Him.
 - Oh, sing hallelujah . . . Our hope spring eternal . . .
Oh, sing hallelujah . . . Now and ever we confess . . .
Christ, our hope in life and death.