

You Asked For It” 25’
“What Happens After We Die?”
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NIV)

Hey Newsong!

I want to take a moment to welcome our first-time guests and those watching with us online!

I’m so excited because today we’re kicking off our new teaching series “You Asked For It”

Many weeks ago we said “Hey, do you have a question about God, life, or the Bible that you would like to hear a sermon about?”

And I want to thank those of you who sent in your questions!

Today and next week I’ll be breaking down your questions about eternity...

In week 3 our E.L.T. will be taking your questions live...and answering some of your other questions that didn't fit into a category...It's going to be awesome!

In week 4 Pastor Barbara will be answering the question "How can I forgive a person who hurt me?" You don't want to miss that...

Now, do you want to know what topic you wanted to hear about the most? We received the most questions about the Holy Spirit...

In fact, there were so many questions, that we're going to have a whole series starting in October just on the Holy Spirit!

If you're new with us, you may be thinking well, I have a question...You can still submit your questions and we will do our best to answer them as best we can!

You may be thinking...wow I've never heard of a church doing this before...Welcome to Newsong! You're in a safe place to ask questions...Hey we've all got questions, and we look to God and His Word for the answers!

Today we're answering the question
"What happens to you when we die?"

This is a great question...and depending upon your world view the answers will vary...

For instance an **atheist** will say something like...nothing happens to you when you die...when you die, you're dead...you lose consciousness...you have no sense of self...you cease to exist as a person and there is nothing after this life to look forward to...so live it up while you can!

Now agnostics are a little more superstitious...

They believe a higher power may exist in some form or another...but it's impossible to know for sure...And because of that

An **agnostic** will say something like...It's really impossible to say for sure what happens to a person when they die...

A **Hindu** has a pantheistic worldview...They believe in reincarnation and depending upon how good you are in life...that will determine what you come back as...The goal is for your soul to break free from the cycle of reincarnation and become one with the ultimate reality known as "Brahman"

I'm going to spend the rest of this message speaking from a biblical worldview...According to the Bible, eternity awaits us all...For those who are saved, we get to spend eternity with Jesus in Heaven...For those who are not saved they spend eternity apart from Jesus in Hell

That's a simple explanation but it will do for now...Now maybe you're here today or you're watching online and you're like I don't agree with that...That's fine...let's all come to a place where we can agree...

Everybody, Eventually, Dies...

Every single person, regardless of what color you are...or how much money you make...

Regardless if you take the train or have your own vehicle...Regardless if you live uptown or downtown...

Regardless of how many followers you have on IG...or how many degrees you've earned...

Every single person...Whether you're a Democrat or a Republican...Whether you're pro Israel or pro Palestine...

Whether you watch CNN or Fox
News...Whether you like dogs or
cats...chocolate or vanilla...

We all have one thing in common...
At some point...we are all going to die

Well that's depressing isn't it?
We might as well all go home now...

Here's the thing...we don't like to talk about it...
We don't like to think about it...We don't even
want to think about talking about it...

And so because of that...the idea of eternity
remains kind of a mystery...With all of the
different belief systems it can be
confusing...And because it's so uncertain
people can't find assurance...

If you're finding yourself in that category today
you're not alone...

In our text this morning the church in Thessalonica were confused too.

This was a Greco-Roman culture...They believed in the gods and goddesses of the pantheon...so the idea of eternity was dark and hopeless...

But when they heard the Gospel...It was like a breath of fresh air!

The Apostle Paul told them
The One true God loves us and rescues us,
saves us and gives us eternal life...So now
your life has purpose and meaning...

You can live for Him...be part of His mission...Because He's coming back for you soon!

That's still good news today!

So what happened is they were living their lives anticipating the return of Jesus...and after a while their family and friends started dying off...

They start wondering “Hey if we die before the return of Jesus does this mean we don’t get to go to Heaven?”

So Paul answers their question in his letter...

13 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. 14 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. 15 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.

16 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. 17 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. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.-1 Th 4:13–18 (NIV)

Now I want to point out a couple of things...

Notice that Paul refers to his audience as “brothers and sisters” This means he’s talking to the church...He’s talking to saved people...people who have repented of their sin and trusted in Jesus for eternal life...

He’s like “hey, I don’t want you to be uninformed about your saved friends and family who “sleep in death”

Now because Paul uses the word sleep here some people believe that when a person dies their soul sleeps...Kind of like when they knock you out for surgery...no dreams no idea whats going on...just out...

This isn't teaching that our soul sleeps...Paul is using the word "sleep" as a euphemism for death...It's a nice way of saying someone died...

Think about it...if you go to a funeral and you see a person in the casket, they look like they're asleep...

Jesus does the same thing in John 11... His friend Lazarus has died from an illness and Jesus says

11 Then he said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up."

Now if you know the story...How does Jesus wake up Lazarus? Does he set an alarm? Does he throw cold water on him? When my kids wouldn't get up I would go and turn their lights on and rip the blankets off the bed...

Does Jesus do that? No...Jesus resurrects Lazarus because Lazarus wasn't asleep...Lazarus was dead...

12 The disciples said, "Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!" 13 They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died. 14 So he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead-Jn 11:11-14 (NLT)

So the word sleep is used as a euphemism for death...

The Greek word is **koy-mah'-o** and it's the same root word where we get the English word cemetery...

Now here's something very interesting...The word **koy-mah'-o** is only used in the NT for a believer in Jesus...It's never used to describe an unbeliever who has died...

This means that as Christians, we don't have to fear death...Death for the follower of Jesus is as scary as taking a nap...If you love to nap throw you're hands up!

I'm a power nap guy...You just let me recharge for about 15 minutes and I'm good to go!

How about those Sunday after church naps?

Who doesn't like naps? The only people I know who are afraid of a nap are little kids...a nap to a child is like torture...

When you stop and think about it...the older you get... your childhood punishments turn into life goals...

Eat your veggies...

Take a nap...

Stay inside and do nothing...

Go to bed early...

The point I'm trying to make is that Paul wants us to know that as a Christian... we don't have to be afraid of death...Death is just a doorway into eternity with Jesus...

So far we've established that death is a reality for all...and that for a Christian it's as scary as falling asleep on your couch...

Now I want you to put a marker in our text because we're going to come back to it...But we're trying to see how the Bible answers the question of what happens to us after death

So let's flip back to the 16th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, and look at a story that Jesus tells us to help answer our questions...

Lk 16:19–31 (NIV)

Now we could spend weeks on this story...But I've only got minutes so here's what I want you to notice about what happens after death...

Two DESTINATIONS

According to Jesus...the moment we die we are immediately in one of two places...

“Heaven” (Abraham's Side)

Some people read this story and think that after we die we still go to an in-between place...(kind of like purgatory) That's not the case...

Abraham's side refers to being in the presence of God...it's a place of rest...Abraham is the father of the Jewish faith...so Lazarus is sitting next to Abraham...It means that they are in God's presence...it means that they're in “Heaven”

The Rich Man however immediately ends up in Hades...Or Hell...

Now I want to say something here...Lazarus isn't in heaven because he was poor...and the rich man isn't in hell because he was rich...

Lazarus didn't go to heaven because he was a good person and the rich man didn't go to hell because he was a bad person...

The bottom line is Lazarus was a believer... He had a heart that was right with God...and He's immediately in Heaven...

The rich man had a heart that wasn't right with God and he immediately ends up in Hell

Now why can the rich man see Lazarus? Okay scholars believe that before the death burial and resurrection of Jesus...Hades had two sections...

There was a comfort section and a torment section...A smoking section and a non-smoking section...

So when a believer died before the finished work of Jesus, they went to the comfort section of Hades...Where they waited for Jesus...

So during the three days that Jesus' body was in the tomb, scholars believe that Jesus went to Hades and preached or proclaimed the good news...

He fulfilled the promise that they've been waiting for and what did He do? He set the captives free...All of those in the comfort section went to Heaven...

So now, because of Jesus...when we die as believers we go right to Heaven...

Now what about the unbeliever? Sadly before the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus they were in the torment section of Hades...

And that's where an unbeliever still goes to this day...But the Bible tells us that in the end of days...

Jesus is going to return and He's going to judge both the unbelievers who are alive at the time and those who have been waiting in Hades...It's called the White Throne Judgement...

The Bible tells us that immediately after the white throne judgment, all non-believers will be cast into the Lake of Fire which is reserved for the devil, the anti-christ and demons...

Okay so we all die...

Immediately after death we go to either Heaven or Hell...

We are CONSCIOUS

When a person dies they are aware...our soul doesn't sleep...we're very much awake...we can still think...we have emotions...

We can feel...Lazarus knows God...he's in Heaven...He's comforted...

The Rich man obviously doesn't know God...he's in hell...he's tormented...He's physically and emotionally in agony...

I can't tell you how many people I've talked to over the years that mock the idea of God and glorify hell...

You see it in today's music and in movies...hell is a party place...a place of unlimited pleasure and rebellion...

It's really sad because people are ignorant of the truth...they're uninformed...

Now again if you're saved...being conscious after you die is amazing! No more sickness or disease...

No more aches and pains...I don't know about you but there's some days my body just won't cooperate with me...

I pulled a muscle you know how? Walking! If I don't have the right pillow...I can't move my head the next day...

Pastor Cyndie and I went Kayaking last week...we paddled for 6 miles...when I woke up the next day my whole right side from my hip to my head felt like I got hit by a truck...

No more pain...No more sorrow...No more tears...No more sickness or suffering...
Every wrong is made right...That's what's waiting for all of us who are saved...It's the only place to be, because that's where Jesus is!

Now when you go back to our main text you understand why Paul doesn't want us to be uninformed...And why he wants us to encourage one another with these words...

According to the Bible eternity has
Two destinations...
We're conscious...

Here's a great one (at least for believers)

Heaven is a **RELATIONAL** place

Heaven is a relational place too...Right now if you're saved, you have what we call a personal relationship with Jesus Christ...

We're developing a level of intimacy with God...But when we die...We get to see Him face to face! Our relationship with Him is going to get better!

We won't just know Jesus in eternity...We will know each other...In the story the rich man knows who Lazarus and Abraham are...

Back in our main text Paul says I don't want you to worry about your saved loved ones...

In other words you'll see them again...They'll know you and you'll know them!

12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.-1 Co 13:12 (NIV)

How many of you have a loved one who loved Jesus and has now gone to be with Him?
You're going to see them again!

I get to see my brother who died from cancer 11 years ago...I get to see my father who died 3 years ago...

I have friends who are in God's presence right now...And one day I get to see them again!

Now let's flip back to our text...

13 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-1 Th 4:13 (NIV)

Heaven is a **HOPEFUL** place

Notice that Paul doesn't say that we shouldn't grieve when we lose a loved one? Of course we need to grieve...

As believers, when another believer dies, we have a confidence...a hope, an assurance...it's not a mystery...we don't have to wonder if they were "good enough" to get to heaven...

None of us are “good enough” that’s why God sent us Jesus...so we’re sad because we’re not going to see them for a while...but we know that one day we will!

Evangelist Billy Graham once said...

"Someday you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. I shall be more alive than I am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God"

As believers that’s the confidence and the hope that we have...

Now notice what Paul says...The rest of the world doesn’t have that hope...This means that an uninformed person...a person who doesn’t have the hope we have...a person who is far away from God...

They are hopeless...That's ultimately what following your own path...or trusting in something other than Jesus will leave you...hopeless...

In the story we just read...the rich man was hopeless...hopelessly separated from God for all eternity...

And according to Jesus that's where most people are going to end up...

13 “You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. 14 But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it-Mt 7:13–14 (NLT)

That's not what God wants, in fact the Bible tells us in **2 Peter 3:9**

That God's will is that no one would perish but that all would repent...that all would turn away from their sin and trust in Jesus...

People say how can a good God send people to hell...He doesn't...People choose it for themselves...

God has given us free-will...we get to choose Him...And the bottom line is people choose everything else...anything else but Him...

It's the broad road...it's the easy way...doing life their way...

"The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts. (Lewis, C S, The Screwtape Letters)

The fact is that God doesn't want you to follow "your truth"

He wants you to follow The Truth...He doesn't want you to go your own way...He wants you to follow The Way...He doesn't want you to live "your life"...He wants you to live The Life...

That life is only found in Jesus!

And I want you to know today that if you're here or you're watching online...and you don't know God...We're glad you're here...

I'm not trying to scare the hell out of you...I'm trying to preach hope into you...

Because as long as you're still alive you can choose Jesus! You can have the same assurance...the same confidence...that you know where you're going when you die...

You're not too far gone...to be saved...
Jesus stands ready to save you right now!

You may be thinking how can I be saved? The Bible tells us that there's nothing we can do to save ourselves...

Romans 3:23 tells us that "all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory"

That sin separates us from God...

And because God is good and just...because there is no wrong in Him...all sin will be judged and and rightly condemned...

In the OT the people of God would have to sacrifice a perfect lamb and spill its blood on the altar once a year to cover over their sins...but it was only temporary...

Because God loves us He sent His Son Jesus who lived His life without sin...He's the perfect Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world...

Jesus paid for our sins with His blood...and now offers us eternal life as a free gift...

How do I accept this gift if I can't earn it?

9 If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved-Ro 10:9-10 (NLT)

Let's settle this today...

Maybe you've been running away from God for a long time...it's time to run to God...

“Invitation”

Now I have one question for all of the believers...if you believe everything you've heard today...and heaven and hell are a reality...

Are you sharing your faith?
Are you informing the uninformed?
Are you snatching others out of the fire?
That's our mission...

We're here to reach people who are far away
from God...to plunder hell and populate
heaven! We have some work to do! So many
people we know are on the wrong road...Lord
give us eyes to see, and a heart that cares!

So as we close today...
We've answered the question "What happens
after we die?" from a biblical worldview...

If you're saved today...I hope that you're feeling
encouraged...You don't have to be afraid of
death...

Jesus defeated hell, death and the grave...and
because you have trusted in Him...you share in
that victory!

In a moment we're going to sing a song and partake of communion together...and thank God for the wonderful gift of salvation through Jesus...

Our prayer team will be available to pray for any need you may have...because we believe that Jesus is more than able to heal, and provide and protect you in this life...

And let the fact that if we or our loved ones physically die before the rapture...We need to grieve, but not like those who have no hope...

We need to remember it's like taking a nap...and the moment you close your eyes...you will open them in Heaven!

As the worship team leads us, I want you to partake of communion together...maybe gather in groups of three or four and share this moment together!

Altar Time

Introduction to the series

- Plans for the future/We're focused on life
 - We don't like to think about death
 - We can eat right, say our prayers and take our vitamins/10 out of 10 die
 - Don't want you to be uninformed
 - Lots of different beliefs
 - List beliefs

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NIV)