

ii. Acts 28:15

E. Snatched from Life to Life!

i. “But what about the Rapture?”

ii. ESV Job 22:16 *“They were snatched away before their time; their foundation was washed away.”*

iii. Paul is playing on this common metaphor for death.

IV. Comfort One Another (18)

A. The goal of this text is to comfort, not predict.

B. Not everyone who is grieving loss needs these words, but the Thessalonians did.

LIVE THE STORY

The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community. The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- Have you ever thought that the answer to some of your most fundamental human needs is theology? That the comfort you need in your grief might be found in theology?
- Why is it important to remember that the goal of this text is to comfort, not predict?
- Explain: Not everyone who is grieving loss needs the same words Paul gave the Thessalonians, but they did. What can we learn from this, however, that will be helpful when people are grieving?
- From this letter to the Thessalonians, how do we see the importance of our “hope” in how we face both life and death?

Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Introduction

Kelly Kopic: *“Do any of us really know why a particular event happens?”*
“A tragedy is still a tragedy; pain is still pain, even if some insight is gained in the process. We may hope that God has reasons for allowing suffering in his world, but that is very different from thinking we have access to those reasons or can understand why a particular experience of suffering is taking place.”¹

Paul brings comfort to these grieving believers by filling out their understanding of the Christian hope—a hope which transforms both how we face life and death.

I. Christians Should Grieve Differently (13)

A. Paul's answer to their grief is theology!

B. This is something Paul does need to write to them about!

- i. They had never been taught this before.
- ii. They had heard enough about the Christian hope to transform their lives, but they had not heard enough to transform their grieving.

¹ Kelly Kopic, *Embodied Hope*, 22-23.

C. "Those who have fallen asleep..."

- i. *Sleep* was used by Jesus to speak of death (John 11:11-13).
- ii. *Sleep* was also used of the living who are still living in a slumber... as if it were night time, not realizing that it is day.

D. Paul is not telling them that Christians cannot grieve the loss of loved ones!

- i. Paul would have had "sorrow upon sorrow" (Phil. 2: 27).
- ii. He tells the Romans to "weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12: 15).
- iii. Grief in the world around them was deep and inconsolable; grief for a Christian is also deep, but it is not inconsolable.

II. Because of our Core Gospel Belief (14)

A. Their common profession of the gospel with all God's people

- i. Paul cites a confession the church likely used in worship.
- ii. The resurrection of Jesus guarantees the resurrection of believers who have died.
 - a) 1 Cor. 15:16-18
 - b) Christ's resurrection and yours are so joined that you cannot have either one without the other.
- iii. Their hope was not for a disembodied experience with Jesus.

B. "But God will bring with Jesus..." (14b).

- i. The Thessalonians have been waiting for Jesus.
 - a) 1 Thess. 1:9-10

b) 1 Thess. 3:13

ii. Christ's coming and celebration.

III. Because Your Loved Ones Won't Miss Out on the Celebration! (15-17)

A. The coming (*parousia*) of the Lord

- i. A technical use of the word.
- ii. Their expectations were rooted in Jesus' teaching.
 - a) Matthew 24:44-47 The masters' possessions are not somewhere else.
 - b) Matthew 25:1-10 The virgins were a welcoming team on behalf of the bride to welcome the groom into the wedding banquet; it wasn't somewhere else!
- iii. *The expectation of the early church was that Jesus was coming back to move His throne from heaven to earth—the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven to earth.*
 - a) The experience of going out to meet Him on His way was a big part of their hope.
 - b) This hope fueled their work of allegiance, labor of love, and endurance of hope in the Lord Jesus (1:3).

B. They thought their dead loved ones were going to miss out on something.

C. These deceased believers will not miss out!

D. "To meet the Lord"

- i. Matthew 25:6