

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 – The Returning King

I. Review

- A. 1 Thess 1:1-3:13 – Paul praises God for the Thessalonians positive response of fear of God, faith in Christ, and example-setting after his preaching ministry there. He reaffirms his pure motives as an apostle of Christ as assures them of his longing, zeal, and love for their church.
- B. 1 Thess 4:1-12 – Paul moves to exhort the church to sexual purity/control as a vital avenue of the Lord’s sanctifying work in them, driven by their fear of God, knowledge of Christ, and power from the Spirit.

II. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 – Grieve With Hope and Live with Joy

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. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

5:1 *Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. ² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. (1 Thess 4:13-5:11)*

1. What was the Thessalonians’ problem in 4:13-18? In what sense were the Thessalonians tempted to grieve “as others do” (i.e., pagans)?

"I was not; I was; I am not; I care not" - Translation of common Latin abbreviation on pagan tombstones

"Irene to Taonnophiris and Philo, take heart! I grieved and wept as much over the departed [child of Taonnophiris and Philo] as for Didyman [Irene's own child]. I did everything that was fitting, as did my entire household, Epaphroditus, Thermouthion, Philon, Apollonius, and Plantas. But, for all that, there is nothing that can be done in the face of such things. Therefore comfort one another. Farewell."

- Egyptian letter from 2nd century AD

2. What things did Paul assure the Thessalonians about deceased Christians in v. 14? What do we learn about the Second Coming here? What will be the order of events, according to 1 Thess 4:16-17?

"And the brothers there [from Rome], when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage." (Act 28:15)

3. How do you think most people think about death today? How do many Christians, right or wrong, think about death?

4. What does the Westminster Shorter Catechism say about the Christian's *soul* at death? What does it say about the Christian's *body* at death? Implications?

Q. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united in Christ, do rest in their graves, till the resurrection. – WSC, Q. 37

*"Though he slay me, I will hope in him...And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God,
²⁷ whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." (Job 13:15, 29:26-27)*

"Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." (2 Cor 5:8)

"And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' And he said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'" (Luke 23:42-43)

5. How does Paul's metaphor of "sleep" teach us (careful!) about the "intermediate state" (between death and the bodily resurrection)?

6. How does Paul say a proper understanding of the Second Coming of Christ should affect our lives now? Explain how Paul connects both election and the Second Coming to how we should live *today*?

*"Is it reasonable, I ask you, that what our Lord meant to be sufficient to arouse us to rejoicing and good cheer should engender nothing but sorrow and dismay? If this is so, why do we still boast of him as our Master? Let us, then, take hold of a sounder view, and even though the blind and stupid desire of the flesh resists, let us not hesitate to await the Lord's coming, not only with longing, but also with groaning and sighs, as the happiest thing of all. He will come to us as Redeemer, and rescuing us from this boundless abyss of all evils and miseries, he will lead us into that blessed inheritance of his life and glory." - John Calvin, Institutes, 3.9.5, on Luke 21:28
(*" straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near "*)*