

Parting, Losing, and Leaving

[1 Thes.4:13-18]

Thessalonians: spiritual babies

Immaturity presents problems –

- a. Loss of loved ones difficult at every level
- b. Some were sad over one or more who died
- c. Lord's second coming cannot be learned in matter of few weeks
- d. *Grief, ignorance, and hopelessness* are enemies of Christians

Paul must eliminate immaturity
from this church

Summary of 1 Thes.4

1. Living, 1-8
2. Loving, 9-12
3. Leaving, 13-18

Paul affirms their past salvation,
answers their present questions,
and assures their future hopes

I. Parting, Losing, Leaving ...and Learning

13: say goodbye to ignorance

- At least one convert had died?
- *Some thought Lord would come in their lifetime?*
- *If so, did this crush their hope for one(s) who died – “dead saints miss out”?*
- *Others quit work... (2 Th.3). Why not?*

Paul must address . . .

1. Ignorance (3:10)

- Christians are not immune to ignorance, grief, and worry
- Truth frees, Jn.8:32; 1 Co.15:18

2. False views. “Sleep” (3x ch.4). Mk.5:38-39; Jn.11:11-15; Ac.7:60 [Lk.23:34; Lk.16]

- Early Christians called burial places “sleeping room” (dormitory)
- Death resembles sleep

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3. Despair. Paul does not forbid grief: only the dark sorrow of unbelief. Ph.2:27

For our loss, we mourn;
for their gain, we rejoice

14: hope in a hopeless world

- If they believe truth about Jesus, they must believe truth about the dead
 1. Thessalonians believed in Jesus, but lost hope for the dead

Moderns have hope for dead,
but no faith in Jesus

2. Grammar . . .

Literal: for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also God the ones having slept **through Jesus** will bring with Him

ESV: For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, **through Jesus**, God will bring with him **those who have fallen asleep**
[through Jesus, death is only sleep]

NKJV: For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will **bring with Him** those who sleep in Jesus. (also NASV)

[through Jesus, God will bring them with Him]

15: no saint left behind

- The living will not meet Lord before the dead are raised

The dead have foremost place
in the Lord's triumphant return

- “By word of Lord”: probably an otherwise unrecorded saying of Jesus. Cf. Ac.20:35

16a: you will know...

- His return is bodily ... visible ... audible
- You will hear ¹Voice of archangel, ²Trumpet of God, and ³Shout – signal, (cry of) command
– BDAG
 - Used of shout of hunter to dogs ...
chariot driver to horses ...
captain to rowers ...
officer to troops ...
 - As commander rouses sleeping soldiers,
Lord calls up His dead. Jn.11 illustrates

16b: first things first

- Dead in Christ rise first
 - NOT before other dead, but before living saints are changed
 - NO reference here to resurrection of the unsaved – not part of this discussion
 - The dead in Christ receive resurrection body before the living are changed

17: when hope becomes reality

- The we (living) join those who are with the Lord
- 1 Co.15:50-53, changed
 - *Caught up, meet Lord in air* (to continue on to heaven with Lord)
 - *Ever with Lord*

Paul: the entire blessedness of life eternal is embraced in being united with Jesus

- Jn.14:3

18: what to do with this information?

- Cheer up!
- Encourage (comfort) one another –
(present imperative)

I. Parting, Losing, Leaving...Learning

II. **Lessons**

Without hope for future, we have
no power for present, 13

Do not despair. 1 Jn.3:2-3

- 1 Co.15:18-19, pagan world despaired

Epitaph: 'I was not; I became;
I am not; I care not.'

Aeschylus: 'Once a man dies
there is no resurrection'

Theocritus: 'There is hope for those who are
alive, but those who have died are w/o hope'

Catullus: 'When once our brief light sets, there is
one perpetual night thru which we must sleep'

Without Christ, there is no hope

- Ep.2:12, *no hope, without God in the world*
- Mt.22:...31-33, Sadducees
- Gentiles were strangers to such promises

They suffered a double sorrow: for their loss, then for loss suffered by the departed

- “Irene to Taonnophis and Philo, good comfort. I was as sorry and wept over the departed one as I wept for Didymas...But nevertheless against such things one can do nothing. Therefore comfort one another”

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- Aristides, c. A.D. 125: “And if any righteous man among them passes from the world, they rejoice, and offer thanks to God; and they escort the body as if he were setting out from one place to other near” – Apology

Focus of unbelievers

- Death, sorrow, loss, separation, earth

Paul's focus

- Life, joy, gain, reunion, heaven, praise

Hope: desire + expectation

- Expectation of what?
 1. Reunion, 1 Th.2:19-20; 2 Th.2:16
 2. Resurrection, 1 Co.15:52

1 Co.15 – Corinthians had learned too much of Plato, too little of gospel

Hope: desire + expectation

- Expectation of what?
 1. Reunion, 1 Th.2:19-20; 2 Th.2:16
 2. Resurrection, 1 Co.15:52
 3. Rescue, 1 Th.1:10
 4. Relationship, 1 Th.4:17

Eternity is not long enough to
thank Him for His saving grace

One who dies in Christ, remains in Christ, even in death, 15

- *Abide with Me*

- Since Jesus died and arose, one who dies in Him will rise

“By the death and burial of His body He came down to our condition; by His Resurrection He raised us to His position” – Vine

- “That’s loud enough to wake the dead”

Death evokes extreme reactions

- Sinners sorrow for loved ones; Christians for themselves, Ph.2:27
- Death's greatest pain (child); greatest relief (old person in agony). Ph.1:21-23
- The spiritual condition determines nature of our mourning
 - 2 Sm.12, David's son died; he stopped grieving. "Good night"
 - 2 Sm.18f., David's son died; he started grieving. "Good bye"