

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Not Grieving As Those Who Have No Hope

4:13 But we do not want [wish] you to be uninformed [ignorant], brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

1. "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren"

- a. He is about to give them information they needed to know.
- b. "Uninformed" is from "agnoeo" [ag nah eh oh] meaning "to be ignorant, not to understand."
- c. It is not sinful to be ignorant, but it is foolish and sinful to deliberately remain ignorant.

2. "about those who are asleep"

- The word "asleep" is a euphemism for dead. (Matt. 9:24; 27:52; Mk. 5:39; Lk. 8:52; Jn. 11:11; Acts 7:60; 13:36).
- The word "sleep" is used in the same way. (Jn. 11:11; 1 Cor. 15:51).

Jn. 11:11 This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep."

1 Cor. 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, "mysterion" [moo stay ree ahn] - "mystery, a secret which would remain such without revelation."

- a. This language of sleep is often used to describe death.
- b. It does not mean the deceased person is not in a state of consciousness elsewhere, but the body of the person has the appearance or repose of a deceased person.
- c. The dead are conscious either in "Abraham's bosom" or "Hades." (Lk. 16:19-25).
 - 1) "Abraham's bosom" is also known as "Paradise" in the gospels. (Lk. 23:43).
 - 2) Paul called it "the third heaven" or "Paradise" in 2 Corinthians 12. (2 Cor. 12:2,4).

2 Cor. 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a man was caught up to the third heaven.

2 Cor. 12:4 was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

- 3) "Hades" can mean "grave" (Acts. 2:27, 31), but in Luke 16 it denotes a place of conscious suffering. (Lk. 16:19-31).
- 4) "Hades" never has a positive meaning. (Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Lk. 10:15; 16:23; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13,14).

5) It means “the grave” or “the place of punishment” where wicked spirits are held until the judgment.

3. “so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope”

- Paul is not forbidding grieving for this is a natural response when we lose a friend or loved one in death.
- We are to “weep with those who weep.” (Rom. 12:15).
 - a. One should not grieve over the death of a believer like over the death of an unbeliever.
 - b. The words “no hope” are perhaps the saddest words ever written.
 - c. “The rest” speaks of those outside of Christ.
 - d. There are sadly many “who have no hope” - Eph. 2:12

Eph. 2:12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, **having no hope** and without God in the world.

1) The Bible clearly identifies those “who have no hope.”

2) They are the ones separated “from Christ” and are “without God in the world.” (Eph. 2:12).

3) They are the ones following the broad road leading to destruction. (Matt. 7:13, 14).

4) They are the ones not doing the will of God. (Matt. 7:21-23).

e. One must trust and obey Christ to be saved. (Jn. 14:6; 3:36; 6:47; Heb. 5:9).

4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

1. “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again” - “If” does not denote doubt on the part of Paul or the believers at Thessalonica, but denotes they accepted the death and resurrection of Christ as fact.
 - a. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ are the very heart of the gospel. (1 Cor. 15:3,4).
 - b. The fact Jesus has been raised is a guarantee we will be raised.
 - c. Jesus is the “first-fruits” of the resurrection. (1 Cor. 15:22, 23).
2. “even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus”
 - a. “Bring” is from “ago” [**ah** goh] meaning “lead, bring, go.”
 - b. The focus of these words are those who have died in Christ and are awaiting the resurrection.

Possible Explanation

1. Some believe that when Jesus comes again that He will come with His angels and believers who are in “Abraham’s bosom.” They had fallen asleep in Jesus, but their spirits were separated from their bodies.

- a. The spirits of those in Abraham's bosom will then be united with their resurrected bodies.
- b. This is a very possible meaning.
- c. We know for sure that He will come with "all the angels." (Matt. 25:31).

Matt. 25:31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and **all the angels with Him**, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

2. We cannot be as sure of the coming of those who fallen asleep and whose spirits reside in "Abraham's bosom."

Another Possible Explanation

1. The context can be understood in another way.
2. Paul's may have referred not to His initial coming, but may refer to those who are raised after His coming. (1 Thess. 4:15).
3. Paul is making the point, in context, that they [the dead in Christ] are not at a disadvantage.
4. They will be raised from the grave and then ascend into heaven.
5. The exact moment the spirits of the saints are united with the resurrected bodies is not stated, and is not important.

Some Additional Thoughts

1. All the dead will be raised when Christ comes again. (Jn. 5:28,29; Acts 24:15).

Jn. 5:28 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour [time] is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, Jn. 5:29 and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

Acts 24:15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

2. The bodies of those whose spirits are in Paradise will be raised.
3. Their "souls" or "spirits" may immediately return to their physical bodies and they shall be raised incorruptible.
4. This uniting of spirit and body could be at any time the Lord chooses.
5. Believers do not now have those new spiritual bodies, but will when Christ comes again. (1 Jn. 3:2; 1 Cor. 5:51-53).

4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1. "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord" - Lit. "by a word of [the] Lord."
 - a. He is referring to the teachings of the Lord either coming directly from the mouth of Jesus or coming from His inspired apostles who were guided into "all truth." (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:13).
 - b. What Paul is writing had been given him by revelation of the Lord. (Gal. 1:11,12).

2. “that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord”

- a. The pronoun “we” does not necessarily mean Paul expected to be alive when Jesus comes again.
- b. Elsewhere Paul recognized he might be dead when Christ comes again. (1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14).

1 Cor. 6:14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also **raise us up** through His power.

2 Cor. 4:14 knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus **will raise us** also with Jesus and will present us with you.

- c. Later in this epistle Paul acknowledged the coming of the Lord was at an uncertain time. (1 Thess. 5:1-2).

1 Thess. 5:1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.

1 Thess. 5:2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

- d. No one knows, including Paul, when the Lord is coming again. (Matt. 24:36).

Matt. 24:36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

- e. All must live with the expectation and readiness that Christ can return at any time without warning.

- f. This verse does affirm whether some or many will be alive when Christ comes.

- g. Paul, like every other person, knew neither the day or the hour. (Matt. 24:42).

- h. Men will not end this world, but the Lord will at the time of His choosing end the world.

- i. The Lord will destroy this world when He comes again. (2 Pet. 3:10-13).

2 Pet. 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

2 Pet. 3:11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

2 Pet. 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

2 Pet. 3:13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

3. “will not precede those who have fallen asleep”

- a. All believers will ascend to be with Christ.

- b. What a glorious day and a glorious sight!

1) Imagine the excitement of receiving a new immortal, incorruptible body!

2) Imagine seeing all the redeemed ascend to meet Jesus in the air!

3) Imagine seeing all the angels ascending to meet Jesus!

- c. Those alive will not have an advantage over the dead, but all will ascend at the same time to meet Christ in the air.

4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout [a word of command], with the voice of *the* [an] archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

- “The” before “archangel” is in italics. The Greek literally has “an archangel.”
- “The” probably conveys the meaning of Paul.

1. “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven” (1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Thess. 1:7).

1 Thess. 1:10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come

2 Thess. 1:7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

- a. Jesus will not send a representative, but He will come personally.
- b. The Bible teaches “every eye” shall see Him. (Rev. 1:7).

Rev. 1:7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and **every eye will see Him**, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

- c. His coming will not be a secretive return.
 - d. No one will have to tell us about it, but each person will see His coming with their own eyes.
2. “with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God”

- a. “The archangel” is Michael. (Jude 9).
- b. There is, however, more than one archangel. (Dan. 10:13).

Dan. 10:13 "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, **Michael, one of the chief princes**, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.

- c. Only Michael is specifically mentioned, but this does not mean the other archangels will not have a part in Christ’s second coming.
- d. They are mentioned by inference by the words “all the angels” in Matthew 25:31.
- e. The Bible speaks also “the trumpet of God” being associated with Christ’s coming. (Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52).

Matt. 24:31 "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

1 Cor. 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

3. “and the dead in Christ will rise first” - The dead saints are described as being “in Christ.” They came into Christ by faith and baptism. (Gal. 3:26,27).
- a. Paul is not affirming there will be two resurrections - one of the righteous and another of the wicked.

- b. He is discussing some details about the resurrection of the righteous.
- c. Some had a problem thinking the living would have an advantage over the dead.
- d. “First” is used to mean the living will not have an advantage over the dead.
- e. The dead will be raised “first” and then they and those who are alive will together ascend to be with Jesus in the air.
- f. The righteous will be raised on “the last day.” (Jn. 6:39, 40, 44).

Jn. 6:39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

Jn. 6:40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Jn. 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

- g. There will not be a resurrection of the wicked a 1,000 years [about 365,000 days] later.
- h. All will be raised when Christ comes and stand before the judgment seat of Christ. (2 Cor. 5:10).

4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

1. “Then we who are alive and remain” - See notes 1 Thess. 4:16.
 - a. “We” denotes believers who are alive when Christ comes again.
 - b. Jesus will find believers when He returns, but there is no way to determine the number of believers who will be alive at His coming.
 - c. The number could be great and small.
 - d. Even if there is a great the number of believers alive at Christ’s coming, it will be a small percentage of all the believers who have lived.
2. “will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air”
 - a. The Greek has “harpazo” [hahr **pah** zoh] literally meaning “to seize, pluck, take [by force].
 - b. It can be translated “shall be seized together with them in [the] clouds.”
 - c. Without more information the words “caught up together” seem to convey the meaning of what Paul was saying.
 - d. This may or may not involve force.
3. “and so we shall always be with the Lord”
 - a. The word “always” is very significant. It literally means “at all times” coming from “pantote” [**pahn** tah teh].
 - b. Believers will “always” [at all times] be with the Lord in heaven. (Jn. 14:3).

c. Heaven is eternal, that is, it never ends. (Matt. 25:46; Rev. 22:5).

4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1. There are many ways we are to “comfort with another.”
 - a. “parakaleo” [pah rah kah **leh** oh] means “exhort, encourage, comfort, console.”
 - b. Any of these meanings fits this admonition.
2. One way is to constantly remind one another that Jesus Christ is coming again.
3. By the grace of God Christians will be victorious and ascend to be with Christ in heaven.
4. It is comforting to have the realization [the assurance] that we will be victorious in Christ.
5. All the trials and demands of the Christian life are trivial in comparison to the eternal glory that awaits us.

“Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,
© Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation
Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)