

1st Thessalonians Ch 4:9-18

Comfort In Christ's Coming

Vs9-11

We left off last week with the need to comment on these last couple of vs here as Paul was sort of wrapping up his thoughts with us concerning the way that we're to lead our lives as believers. and We spoke in some detail regarding practical holiness, what that means to a certain degree for the believer, (this context dealing with the need to abstain from sexual immorality) to not take part in that which is unclean, we're to be set apart from the godless culture around us. and If our habits, it the things we condone, or take part, in or pay to see or whatever are no different than the godless (in regards to sexuality, of any kind outside of the marriage relationship) than we're not set apart in the manner that God would have us to be. We're to know how to possess our vessel, our bodies in sanctification and honor, and we spoke of the ramifications of allowing the corruption of the world to be poured through the holy vessels of God that have been sanctified by blood and set apart for the work of the ministry, the purposes of God.

As soon as Paul was finished in his exhortation regarding sexual impurity, he brings up love, and I didn't want you to miss that contrast, because so often people try to make a connection between carnal lust, and true love. They say that it's love that they're making, and Paul distinguishes the two so that it's real clear that one has nothing to do with the other in any fashion outside of marriage.

But here in vs 11-12 Paul adds to his list of practical advise, in how we're to conduct ourselves amongst the ungodly, or in the midst of the unbelieving. What is the ambition of the believer to be as it relates to the way that we're to conduct ourselves, what is the witness that we should be giving to the people around us, because everyone has aspirations in life, ambitions and goals, well how does that line in or what does God's Word say concerning my ambitions? 3 Things that the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul tells us we're to aspire to do in life, #1 To lead a quiet life, #2 Mind your own business, and #3 Work with your own hands. This is to be our goal as believers, in essence to keep the peace, just to be quiet, to stay out of other peoples business and to get a job. If you do these things believer you do well.

We're to lead a quite life; I like what the OKJ says here. It says, "*Study to be quiet*" how many college courses are there on that? Yet we'd all agree that we'd all benefit in such a course, our mouths get us into so much trouble, we say things we ought not, we assume rumors about other people and pass them on, the bible says, "*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.*" Prov 10:19 How we need to study to be quiet, that word "Study" or "Aspire" means to "labor intensively", or "make it your aim", your goal in life is to learn to control your tongue and to be quiet. James said, "*Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*" James 1:19

Mind your own business, have you ever walked up on someone or some people and said, “Hey what’s going on” and they responded so lovingly, “Mind your own business!” Well, they were really giving you a biblical exhortation; we’re not to be meddling in other peoples business. Being busy bodies because we have too much idle time on our hands, Peter said, “*Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.*” 1 Peter 4:15-16 Did you catch the implication there? Busybodies aren’t acting Christ like, he says don’t be suffering needlessly as a busybody, but if you suffer as a Christian, hey, don’t be ashamed, glorify God in the matter, what’s the implication? To be a busybody is not to emulate the behavior of Christ, to be in other people’s business is not becoming as a believer.

Well, what’s the remedy, if I have too much time on my hands, and I find myself in the middle of other people’s matters, inevitably speaking *too much* about it? Get a job, ever been on the job site or at the store and you find yourself in a lull for a minute and someone says, “Hey, got time to lean, got time to clean.” This is the kind of principal that’s being stated here, don’t allow yourself too much idle time, get a job. You see the person who’s busy about the business of the Kingdom, doing what God has called them to do, doesn’t have time to be busy about other people’s business. What was happening here is that people were being a burden the people in the church, “It’s all about love so love me and pay my rent. The Lord’s going to return soon so I quit my job and I’m not paying my bills.” and People were sponging off the people in the church and Paul is saying getting job, quit being a sponge and a gossip, and pay your bills, so that you might walk properly or decently, in a manner that’s becoming as a believer towards those who are outside.

A person who’s not paying their bills isn’t being a good witness, cut up your credit cards if you need to and start taking care of business with integrity. Jesus said, “*If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*” Luke 16:11 Warren Wiersbe said, “Christians who defend their orthodoxy but do not pay their bills have no orthodoxy to defend.” and I agree, because we lose our testimony with those who are outside when we don’t render them that which is due them, the Greeks despised manual labor, they let their slaves do that, but God gave us a carpenter King, fisherman apostles, and tent making missionaries, we’re to work with our hands, and provide for our own needs, we’re not to be a burden to others if at all possible. and If you’re financially secure so you don’t need to labor with your hands to pay your bills, then come down here and pull weeds, it’ll keep you out of other peoples business and give you quiet time with the Lord. If you never have quiet time how can you hear from the Lord? We need these things in our lives, quietness, to stay out of other people’s business, and to occupy our time with work, with a way that’s honorable and keeps us from being a burden to others.

Vs13

Now there are a few things we want to address here, Paul while he was in Thessalonica had taught them regarding Christ's soon return and the establishing of the Kingdom of God upon the earth. and Since Paul's been gone either some people have died or there was some confusion concerning the believers that had died as if to say that since they died before Christ's return, then apparently they're going to have to miss out on Christ's Kingdom upon the earth. and They were really disturbed by this whole thought, and so Paul is taking the time in this section that's before us to correct their misunderstanding concerning what happens when a believer dies and how it ties in with the believers who are alive when Christ returns for His church.

The term "those who have fallen asleep" we need to understand carries with it in no way the connotation, or implication of some sort of doctrine of soul sleep. This was just a figure of speech that was used in the church, and you find it in the OT as well regarding those who died in faith. and The church used this term because we don't believe that as believers in Christ we ever really die, we just go from life to life. You remember that Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"* John 11:25-26 and Since we do believe this, then when a believer slips out of this shell, they don't really die, they just move out of this tent into a home in the presence of God. You remember when Jairus' daughter had fallen ill and he'd sought Jesus to come and heal her and before they reached the house some people approached him and said, don't trouble the teacher anymore, your daughter is dead.

and Jesus said, don't be afraid, just believe. and When they got to the house there was all this weeping and commotion and Jesus said, *"Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."* Mark 5:39 When they came to Jesus about Lazarus Jesus waited for 2 days and then He said to His disciples, *"Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well."* (and We read there) *However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead."* So this phrase concerning the believer's death is simply a term to differentiate those who have hope from those who don't, Jesus died so that we would never have to. To be absent from the body is to be present with Christ. So there's no connotation that would allude to soul-sleep, the bible is very clear of the ever present consciousness of every individual whether with Christ or apart from Christ. No one just fades away into nothingness. From the moment you're born (or really even before, while in the womb) throughout eternity there is consciousness.

Paul is saying here, I don't you to be ignorant concerning the believers who have died, and their part in the establishing of the Kingdom of God, or their part concerning Christ's coming for His church, he's speaking here of eschatology, prophetic events. 4 Times in the writings of Paul he mentions the fact that there are certain events, certain doctrines or teachings that he doesn't want the church to be ignorant of, 4 things that he considers it vital that we be well versed on.

#1 “The fullness of God’s plan concerning the nation of Israel.” The fact that God’s not finished with them, and that there will come a day when they will be grafted back into the tree of Christ and be used in a vital way in the last days before the 2nd coming. and That there will actually be a day when every Jew will realize that Jesus is the Christ, humble themselves and be saved, it’s mind blowing, but it’s what the bible teaches. Rom 11:25-26 says, “*For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved.*” #2 “Spiritual Gifts” what they’re for, the use of them, the abuse of them and how the body of Christ is to benefit *from* them. 1 Cor 12:1 “*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant.*” and Then he dedicates the next 2 ch to the explanation of the gifts, balanced in love, decently and orderly for the building up of the believer and the glory of God. #3 Satan’s devices, the weapons of his warfare, his tactics and wiles lest Satan should take advantage of us; (he says in 2 Cor 2:11) “*for we are not ignorant of his devices.*” and Then #4 the one that’s before us here concerning the events which are to take place that are yet future, “Eschatology” God’s plan for His children and the way things are going to come down in the end, the rapture and so on.

Wouldn’t you know probably the 4 most leading subjects that the church is ignorant of today is God’s plan for Israel, Spiritual Gifts, Satan’s devices and prophecy. People are concerned for the church, let Israel worry about Israel, Spiritual gifts are to controversial, Spiritual warfare is something we’d just as soon not think about, and prophetic issues are to confusing. Everyone seems to have a different slant on it so who can really know, so what’s the point of really studying it? and So hopefully this morning we can at least begin to clear up one aspect of one area regarding the coming of Christ for His church the believers role in that event.

Paul says here that he wouldn’t have us to sorrow as others who have no hope when it comes to those who we know *in* Christ who pass on to be *with* Christ. So there are 2 types of sorrow for people when it comes to people dying, there is the sorrow of those who have hope, and the sorrow of those who have no hope. Who are those who have no hope? The people who are in the world who don’t know Christ, in writing to the Eph Paul reminded them of the time that they were, “*without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*” Eph 2:12

But such is not the case with you believer; you have Christ in your heart and in your life therefore you have hope. Again the word “hope” speaking to us as a “guaranteed certainty”, and “assured expectation.” You see I don’t have to wonder what happens to me when I die, I have a guaranteed certainty, I have an assured expectation, that I will be ushered into the presence of Christ, I have hope. People who don’t know the Lord don’t have this hope, they’re filled with *uncertainty*, they have *no assurance*, they’re *with out* hope. So they march to a whole different tune. and So the scientific community, and philosophers of the ages probe the mysteries of death and want to know what happens when we die, but to the believer it’s not a mystery, we know exactly what happens when we die.

Because as it says in vs 15 (though that's a little ahead of us) we know this by the word of the Lord. It's as certain as His Word, so when a non-believer dies we mourn for *them*, because they enter into eternal separation from God. But when the believer dies we mourn for *us* because of our loss in seeing them leave, but we don't mourn for them because, "*to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord*", 2Cor 5:8 it's our loss not theirs.

Vs14

You see the ramifications of the resurrection go well beyond a simple benefit for Jesus, because the bible tells us that, "*God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.*" 1 Cor 6:14 The resurrection of Christ carries with it enormous implications, ramifications and benefits for every child of God. Now before we move on I would have you notice that the word "sleep" isn't used for Jesus. Jesus died, believer's sleep, what's the deal there? Jesus died so we don't have to, He bore the full ramifications of our sin and separation from God so that we can go from life to age abiding life, He paid our penalty of death.

Vs15

You see this isn't Paul's opinion, this is the Word of the Lord, and we're not going to precede (if you have an OKJ and it says "prevent" it's more properly rendered "precede") we're not going to go before them; they've actually gone before us. They're not going to miss out on anything, they're already taking part in it, if anything we're missing out until that day (in that respect). It's not the soul that sleeps, it's the body, when we die, the spirit leaves the body and continues to live with the Lord and my body will sleep, it will no longer function. I'll move out of this raggedy old tent and get a new and improved model, one that's fit for the heavens. You see when you look at me, and I look at you, it's not the real me you see, you see the house I live in, I'm incased so to speak in this body, this shell. The bible likens us to a seed, and when you look at a seed, you don't see the reality of what's in that seed, it's not until it's planted that you see the body that God's intended it to have. It goes in the ground a bulb, and comes up a tulip, so don't be confused, the resurrection isn't "reconstruction" of the earth you came and to the earth you shall return. But you will be given a new body, Jesus said, "*In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*" John 14:2-3 As you may know that word "Mansions" is literally "Dwelling" and He's in reference to your new body, the point being, right now you're living in a tent, and by comparison when you get there, you're moving into mansion, your new dwelling place will be far more advanced than your present one, your present one won't hold a candle to your new one that's to come.

Lets look quickly at 1st Cor ch 15 (vs 35-49)

Or as John said, "*When He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*" 1 John 3:2

Vs16-17

The 1st thing Paul emphasizes here is that the Lord *Himself* will descend, and I love that, He's not going to send an angel to tend to His business, He's coming personally.

Now there's always seemed to have been a bit of ambiguity about this portion of scripture regarding the fact that Jesus will have those who have died in Christ with Him when He comes, and yet this scripture says that they'll rise 1st and then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them and all. and People always want to know what does that mean, the dead in Christ will rise 1st? If they rise 1st where have they been previously, and if they've been with the Lord as the bible teaches than where do they rise from? and Really it's all quite simple if you understand quantum physics which I don't so therefore I have to wrestle with it from time to time in my own being and understanding. But I can tell you that it all has to do with the property of time, and if you could remove that linear quality so that time didn't play a factor, this would all become real clear. But because we have issue in our finite understanding when it comes to blurring the line between the eternal where there is no time and everything is now, and the temporal where everything with out exception is subject to the influence of time, we sort of lose it.

But *you know* that if we could all travel at the speed of light then time would cease to exist, everything would be "now" past, present, future, it's all wrapped up in the "now." Now the bible says that God *is* light (1 John 1:6), God doesn't dwell in the past or in the future, He's always present tense, that's why to be absent from the body is to be "*present*" with Christ, because He's the ever present One. But such is the same with the realm of the eternal it's all happening in the "now", there's no linear quality such as time that interrupts it all. That's why when Moses was talking to God at the burning bush, and he asked Him, whom should I say sent me? God said, "I am that I am" ever present One, not "I was and I hope to be." But "I am" and that is a quality that is purely eternal only God is I am, I'm never really in the now on this side of eternity I'm always right behind it. Because I am, then I was, and as fast as I am, I was, and I hope to be.

But in the eternal, though it's all happening and done at the same time we're still catching up to it, because we're not in the eternal, but as far as God's concerned this is all over and done, that's why Paul said in Eph that "*even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*" Eph 2:5-6 We're a story that's already been told, and we're just catching up to it.

Mind-boggling isn't it? I hope I'm not confusing you, but my simple mind has difficulty grasping these things, so I developed what I call the "poof" theory and that is this. As far as eternity is concerned it all happens that fast, it's "poof, poof" faster than you can say, and that's the way the chain takes place. So that as far as mans perspective is concerned it's a couple of thousand years between people dying and Christ's return for His church, mean while they're with Christ.

But from God's perspective (which is what's in view here) it's just "poof" "poof" and it's over, those who die in Christ, and then the rest of us are caught up, it's a virtually simultaneous action. (and That's about the best I can do with it).

Now, I want you to see that Paul never tries to defend the rapture, he just states it as a fact, it's just the given, and you can major all you want on minors, or get caught up in the snare of semantics. But whether you want to say, "caught up" "snatched away violently" "plucked up" or "taken" it makes no difference to me, the rapture is what's in view here, it's the Greek word "Harpazo." So if you want to say you believe in the "harpazo" of the church that's fine, but we get the word "rapture" from when the Greek was translated into the Latin Vulgate with this word "Harpazo" which they chose the Latin word "rapto" or "rapturus" from which we get our English word "Rapture." So the translators simply expounded that word in our translation and said "caught up" but they could've chose "rapture" just the same.

Later on here in ch 5 Paul will explain why this has to happen, but he never defends the doctrine, he just teaches it. But the fact of the matter is, the rapture of the church isn't really even in view here with in the context of what Paul's talking about. What I mean by that is, the teaching of the rapture isn't what he's focusing on, that's (as I said) simply a given in the text. The concern was, have those who have died missed out on that event, will they not take place in the rapture, have they missed what's going to take place when Christ returns? and Paul's answer is an emphatic *no!* To be certain, they precede *us* in the event, we're the runners up, but when this event takes place we'll be reunited with our loved ones and so shall we ever be with the Lord, it will be an eternal reunion.

Death *separates*, but Christ *reinstates*, death divides us, Christ reunites us, He will cause us to be reconciled once again to our loved ones never to be separated again. and Knowing that this could take place at any moment, what manner of life ought we to be living? Don't fall into the trap that the Lord delays His coming, lest you be caught unaware and miss out on what He's got for you, but rather follow Christ with all your heart and where He is there you will also be.

Vs 18

These words of hope, you have a guaranteed certainty in Christ, an assured expectation that He will come again and receive you to Himself, don't grow weary in doing well, because harvest time is just around the corner.

If you're here today and you don't have this hope, you don't have the comfort in your heart of Christ's coming for you, then today don't harden your heart, but receive His grace. You can walk out these doors brand new but it's only through Jesus Christ who gave His life that you might have life, He was broken for you, that you might be made whole in Him. Listen, the call is urgent, receive Christ.