

# Comfort and thankfulness in bereavement - Part 2

## (Quality: Average)

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- [ 0 : 00 ] I will ask your attention again this afternoon to the word in the first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, the fourth chapter, the eighteenth verse.
- Wherefore, comfort one another with these words. The first epistle to the Thessalonians, the fourth chapter, the eighteenth verse.
- Wherefore, comfort one another with these words. But we remember that I spoke first this morning upon the authority of these words.
- That they did not express the apostle's own mind about matters, but that which had been distinctly delivered unto him by a divine and infallible inspiration of God.
- This we say unto you by the word of the Lord. That it is only, as we can feel, there is an authority in the word of the Lord that it can give us any real comfort in times of sorrow and distress.
- [ 1 : 20 ] And then secondly, I mentioned concerning these words, that they are very instructive.
- And first, that they are instructive with regard to the present state of those that have passed away from us into eternity.
- The apostle would not have the Thessalonians ignorant of their present state. We know very little concerning the state of those who have passed away from us, who have died in the Lord.
- The word of God has instructed us sufficiently for our comfort, but not sufficiently for our curiosity.
- There is much we might like to know. There are many questions we might ask that the word of God just does not answer.
- [ 2 : 25 ] And where the word of God is titled, no one can say anything. But the word of God has taught us sufficient concerning those that have died in the Lord for our comfort.
- And this is that, that they are asleep in Jesus. We believe that they also which sleep in Jesus.
- And I spoke a little of that this morning, and especially concerning our beloved brother, whose name and memory we think upon today.
- Whose loss we mourn, and yet whose example we value, and whose useful service. So long amongst us as a church, we give thanks to God for today.
- We feel sure, according to the word of the Lord, that he is asleep in Jesus. And as I said, the other words of the Lord concerning this state, put together with this, show that this sleep is not a condition of unconsciousness, of having no sense or feelings, but it is expressive of a state of peace, and rest, and relief, and comfort in the Lord.
- [ 3 : 52 ] They that sleep in Jesus. That is a beautiful word. They sleep in Jesus. That is, their hearts find perfect rest in Jesus.

There is a rest in the Lord that believers enter into now. As regards their state, and sometimes as regards their feelings.

And very good it is, really sweet sometimes, to feel that our hearts rest in the Lord. But still, it is often equally true, that here, sorrows break upon my breast, and brooding sorrows steal my rest.

There is no perfect rest as to the state and healing of a child of God in this world. But they that sleep in Jesus pass into perfect rest.

And taking up the subject of these words from that point, I would emerge a little more this afternoon upon the instruction. For this instruction teaches us further, that the Lord himself shall descend from heaven.

[ 5 : 24 ] I pointed out this morning that the foundation of the comfort of these words lies in his death for our sins, and his resurrection from the dead.

That is the foundation of the comfort of these words. But the instruction goes farther. It anticipates what is yet to come. Even that the Lord himself shall descend from heaven.

Now, my friends, here is a truth, a very solemn and a very blessed truth, as it were, well, if we laid more to heart. And considered it.

And if it had that effect upon us, that it belongs to that particular truth to have.

I may have said this before, but it will bear repetition, that every branch of truth to have. That every branch of truth of the gospel concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, if it is made effectual in us, by the Holy Ghost, has an effect that belongs to that particular truth to have.

[ 6 : 44 ] And no other truth will have that same effect. And that, I think, can be demonstrated this way. Now, take the first truth of these words.

I won't go back upon it again this afternoon, except to refer to it. Take the first truth. It is that Jesus died. Now, what effect does that truth have upon our hearts when the Holy Spirit applies it effectively?

Why? It brings peace. It brings pardon. It brings forgiveness. It brings cleansing. It belongs to the truth that Jesus died to bring the effects, those greatest effects, into our hearts.

Our faith must look back to see the burdens that he bore when hanging on the accursed tree to find relief in the burden and distress and guilt of sin.

If it's cleansing we want, there's only one truth can meet that need and that is this. It is that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sins.

[ 8 : 07 ] The effect of the death of Christ in the truth of it upon our hearts is to bring pardon and peace and cleansing and reconciliation into our experience.

No other truth can have that effect. No other truth can. It belongs to that truth to have that effect and a very blessed effect it is and I wish it was more deeply understood and more deeply felt in our hearts.

then there is the resurrection and what goes with the resurrection the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven.

Now there is an effect of the resurrection the apostle the apostle desired himself to know it more although he knew it so much that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

The power of his resurrection simply means the effect of it upon our hearts for you know there is no effect without a cause and there needs to be a power to give any part of the truth of the gospel an effect in our hearts.

[ 9 : 34 ] Now there is an effect to the resurrection of Jesus Christ when we can experience its power and what is that? Why brethren it is to enliven us it is to quicken us it is to enable us to live a spiritual life as risen with Christ and to set our affections on things above.

You see when the apostle would exhort the Ephesians or perhaps it was the Philippians to set their affections on things above to seek to be disentangled from an overmuch concern and interest in the things of this time state he said set your affection on things above and not on things on the earth where Christ sitteth at the right hand of the majesty on high.

Now liveliness of heart heavenliness of desire arising of our affections above the grosser things of earth to the holy things of heaven that's the effect of the power of Christ's resurrection in our hearts.

You see you must not look for Christ on the throne for an atonement for sin you must look to Christ on the cross but if you would feel your affections attracted heavenward then it must be Christ risen and Christ exalted.

But oh how true it is brethren that it is only as we feel the power of that resurrection we do rise and ascend in the affections and faith and desire of our hearts to those things that are heavenly and eternal.

[ 11 : 34 ] There's no question about it if we felt more of the power of his resurrection we should not be so earthly minded. Our affections would rise more instead of groveling they would be set on things above instead of becoming so captivated by things in the earth.

the power of his resurrection that's the secret of that brethren of heavenly affections and upward desires well then if that is true what is the effect of this further instruction in the text namely that the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout the second coming to use the usual term for this the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ well I think there's no question about that it would make us more watchful more careful of ourselves more concerned about the oil in our vessels with our lamps it would make us more that our loins would be girded about and our lights burning and we should be like them that wait for their Lord you see when our loins are slack and our lights are dim and we're not in a waiting posture for the Lord we go to sleep like the virgins did why is it?

it's because the truth of the Lord's second coming is not having its effect upon our hearts that's why now it is for no purpose to look to the truth of the Lord's second coming for forgiveness and pardon you must look back to his first coming for that you must look to Calvary for that but if you would have your spirit more exercised more prepared for the Lord if you would have your life and walk such as that you would not be ashamed before him at his coming then you must lay to heart this truth that the Lord will come again with power and great glory wherefore comfort yourselves together with these words for the Lord will come again and he will receive all his dear people all his ransomed church all true living believers in his dear name he will receive them unto himself there's nothing terrible to the church of God about the Lord's second coming if there is anything terrible to us about it there's something that needs to be corrected in our state of mind and our state of heart if we were in a right state for the

Lord's appearing we could say as the church of God said at the very end of the scriptures when he said surely I come quickly we could say amen even so come Lord Jesus even so come in a certain sense Lord they'll just say I come quickly and the quicker the better for us now why is it brethren that we're not more concerned with regard to this wonderful thing that the Lord will appear again I think there are reasons for it but I need not go into them very fully just now I think one reason for it is because the generations go by and the Lord does not appear and until the expectation of his descending from heaven gets faint in the church on earth it was exactly as the

Lord said that because he delayed his coming they will become careless and indifferent my Lord delayed his coming it was because the bridegroom tarried the virgin slept and it's because the bridegroom still tarried that to a great extent the church on earth is leaving with regard to this and it were a good thing if we were awakened out of our sleep about the Lord's second coming I'm firmly convinced that if this truth that the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangels and the trump of God were realized and felt we could see a great change come over the church of God there'll be more liveliness more expectation more trimming of lamps more ardent desire to be prepared to meet him and more detachment from the things of earth but still there is much comfort in this that the

[17:07] Lord will descend from heaven with a shout as anticipated by the prophet Isaiah I feel in that word in that day they shall say no this is our God we have waited for him and he will save us for you know the the taunt of the wicked their reproach is where is thy God where is Jesus Christ how do you know there is such a person how do you know there is such a God we don't believe there is and so it goes on but in that day they shall say this is our God here he is this is Jesus this is our savior and he is our God and he will save us for in that day we read he shall take away the reproach of his people from the face of the whole earth the

Lord himself shall descend from heaven I don't profess to be able to explain to you these expressions with a shout with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God I have my thoughts about them but because I cannot speak with certainty I'd rather not express what after all may be a misconception in my own mind it is certain that these words have their meaning whatever this shout is it is something that all will hear whatever the trump of God is it will sound whatever the voice of the archangel means that voice will speak this we know that as the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven he was hailed by all the hosts of the angels and worshipped and adored by them even that same person who they had known in his divinity before ever he became man they adored in his humanity when he returned to heaven in our nature and it is certain that when he comes again they will come with him he will come in his own glory and the Father's and with all the mighty angels well now that's the instruction there's a further instruction in these words and that is the resurrection of the dead in Christ the dead in Christ shall rise first that means

I think first before those that are alive and remain for the apostle said that those that are alive and remain shall not prevent them which are asleep and as you know the word prevent in our translation there's an almost total opposition of meaning from our usage of that word now when we speak of preventing we think of hindering but actually the scripture means by preventing going before not hindering going before well now the meaning is this we which are alive and remain shall not go before them that are asleep no the two those that are asleep shall rise first unless of course you understand by this that there will be two resurrections the first resurrection of the dead in Christ first and then the resurrection of the ungodly the wicked the unbelievers afterwards and there seems to be something in the scripture to support that for instance blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection and the first of course implies the second but however that may be that does not must come into the comfort of these words the comfort is that there will be a resurrection for the saints of God they will not always lie in the dust of the grave

I know the resurrection presents many difficulties to our minds because our minds are so finite we cannot grasp what is infinite I know there are many questions about the resurrection of the dead those that have been consumed to ashes or consumed by beasts and so as it were their very substance becomes part of the substance of the beasts that have consumed them and all that sort of thing rises up in the mind but what is the mountain the difficulties really disappear if we believe that this is the word of the Lord and it is the word of him who is almighty and all wise whether the resurrected body will be resurrected from the very dust of the old body or whether it will be formed and new we don't know it is sufficient that in the resurrection the saints of God will have spiritual bodies and that's everything that matters real bodies it may well be that in some cases the very dust that lies in the grave the spiritual body will be formed out of the identical dust if not it doesn't matter as far as

I can understand as long as we are raised in a spiritual body and the dead in Christ appear in a spiritual body that's the great thing and the living will be changed and we shall be changed the apostle here speaks for the we who will be alive when the Lord will return then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air the risen saints the changed saints and all in spiritual bodies for there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body but a spiritual body is a body not a spirit as we read this morning on that chapter in Luke Jesus said a spirit hath not flesh and bones as he seen me have they supposed they had seen a spirit no said

[ 24 : 31 ] Jesus it is me it is my body look at my hands they're the same hands look at my feet they're the same feet handle me and see it's the same body you used to embrace and yet it is a spiritual body now no one can explain what a spiritual body is because we have no experience of it only we believe this according to the word of the Lord that the risen saints will not rise again with such bodies as they were laid in the grain but with spiritual bodies and the living will be changed into exactly the same kind of spiritual body there's comfort in these words and we think that then all that is mortal and sinful and corruptible will have gone and death itself be swallowed up in victory it is not exactly correct to say now that death is swallowed up in victory

I know that believers get the victory over death in Jesus Christ but still with regard to their bodies death has got the victory over them the grave is continually swallowing up the bodies of the saints of God continually swallowing us but at the last resurrection day death will be swallowed up in one eternal and glorious victory so I pondered much over this expression then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air there's something there I can't explain and yet something very instructive Now we read in the Revelation that every eye shall see him.

But how can every eye in the world see him? Because the world is round. And if he were seen in this part of the world, how could he be seen in the other part of the world?

We often be part of the globe. And yet it says every eye shall see him. Well, I very do believe it means this. That he will be so in the air that as the earth revolves, every eye will see him in the air.

He won't go revolve like the earth revolves. He'll be stationary in the air. And as the earth revolves, every eye will see him there in the air. In his glorious appearing.

[ 27 : 35 ] That it isn't fanciful, is it? Because it says expressly that we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And now, just one more thought as I close these words today.

And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Well, that means everything, doesn't it? To be with the Lord forever.

And that means the heavenly state, surely. To be with him forever. It means the state of ultimate perfection.

I was thinking this morning when I was pondering over all this. How imperfect everything is here with us all. Our knowledge.

Our faith. Our love. Our service. Our likeness to Jesus. It's all so imperfect. We hope it's real as far as it goes.

[ 28 : 44 ] But it doesn't go very far. What we know is very precious. But it's very little comparison. But everything is perfect.

In that last, final and blessed state with the Lord. For instance. His throne shall be in it.

That means perfect government. His throne. And that government is a government that will fill and control and rule and govern every saint of God with a perfect control of love.

And his servant shall serve him. that is perfect service. For it's serving him without sin. And without weariness.

And without distraction. And that they shall see his face. And that means perfect vision. Not just now, to the exercise of faith believing.

[ 29 : 57 ] And that often interrupted and dim. For they shall see his face means perfect vision. And his name shall be in their forehead.

And that means perfect conformity. Perfect conformity. Everything is perfect in heaven.

And there shall be no more curse. That means perfect freedom from sin. And the land that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them unto fountains of living waters.

That means perfect supply. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. That means perfect purpose.

And that is to be forever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these blessed words.

[ 31 : 03 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.