

1 Thessalonians

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Preacher: Wood, Clement (1920-2010)

[0 : 00] In dependence upon the Lord for all needed help, I venture to draw your prayerful attention to the first epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter 4, a part of verse 17 with verse 18.

First epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter 4, verse 17, last clause with verse 18.

And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

What a glorious prospect awaits the dear people of God, the Church of Christ, the Bride of Christ.

The best is yet to be. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what the Lord hath prepared for them that love him.

[1 : 53] Paul speaks of being with Christ, which is far better.

If such the sweetness of the streams, what must the fountain be, where saints and angels draw their bliss immediately from thee.

The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is full of unspeakable comfort to all who fear God, both small and great, to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth.

And yet, I fear that it is a much neglected doctrine by us.

simply for this reason, that many, and we sympathise very deeply with this, have such a fear, lest that they should get out of death, misunderstand or misinterpret the Word of God, lest we should be brought to a place of error.

[3 : 43] But, my friends, there is that set before us in Holy Scripture, which is for the strengthening of our faith, and for the confirming of our love.

True, we see but through a glass darkly. But, as we read in the closing words of Scripture, He that testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly.

The response of the believer, longing, looking, hoping for it, even so, come, Lord Jesus.

You will observe, in that precious Word, He that testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come.

It doesn't say, I will come. I come quickly. I remember reading many years ago, an illustration of this point.

[5 : 15] If mother and a child are in the same house, for example, and the child may be some distance from mother, and may even call for mother, mother says, I am coming.

She is not yet with the child, but she is on the way. That is the meaning of this most precious Word.

Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him.

So shall we ever be with the Lord. In the first place, let us and all how one does pray, that we may receive this night, some comfort in our souls, some strengthening of our faith, some confirming of our hope.

Consider of how the Lord Jesus Himself and the Word speaks of His coming again. And in the first place, it is very, very solemn.

[6 : 39] While the earth remaining, seed time and harvest, that is, until the end of time, and there will be an end.

The harvest is come. Those who labour on the land, and we unite with them with thankfulness to Almighty God for the provision of the harvest this year, but they teach us many lessons.

There is an ingathering of the grain, the fruit, that which is of value, but not everything is of value in that field.

There is the char. There is the bonfire. There is the burning. There is the consuming.

Oh, friend, our religion is going to be put to that final test. And the Lord, the fire, shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

[8 : 02] Only that, which is of the Holy Ghost, will abide the fire. All else, however, it may be respected among men, if it's destitute of the Holy Ghost, will be consumed.

Be solemn to be found a tear, gathered up in bundles to be burned. Solemn to find there's no oil in the vessel.

In the vessel. Solemn to see that door shut. Solemn to think of that word of the Lord Jesus, there is a great gulf fixed.

Solemn as we view the dear shepherd and he shall gather all nations before him and he shall separate them as a shepherd doth his sheep from the goats.

And that word nations, I simply believe to mean this, all peoples from all nations, everyone. And there'll be a final separation.

[9 : 23] The Lord knoweth them that are his. And my friend, the sheep shall be on his right hand and the goats on his left.

We go back to Calvary. We witness that Jesus was numbered among the transgressors. We witness that one sank without repentance into hell.

The other brought and led by the Spirit. Praying to Jesus, faith in the Saviour, repentance for his sin, received by Jesus, a place in heaven with Jesus.

So beloved, how stands the case my soul with thee? For heaven are thy credentials clear? Is Jesus' blood thy only plea?

Is he thy great forerunner there? You see, the sheep the Lord will say, come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

[10 : 33] Blessed word, isn't it? But what of the others? There's something prepared for them. Depart from me ye cursers into that everlasting punishment that prepared for the devil and his angels.

So how blessed the words of the Saviour, let not your heart be troubled.

Ye believe in God, believe also in me. 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. What Lord for me? A sinner a vile. Yes, poor sinner. That one for whom Jesus came in love and laid down his life and shed his precious blood on that cross.

I go to prepare a place for you and if no peradvent that as I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also I have sometimes looked at that word and it comes very sweetly this man this same Jesus receiveth sinners and he that says come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest all that the father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out he receives them honour and he will receive them the glory and these that fear his name they shall be mine saith the

[12 : 43] Lord in that day when I make up my jewels so we have my friends this glorious truth this blessed prospect but now to come nearer to this subject so shall we ever be with the Lord I want to spend a little time now on this very little word so meaning this is in this way then we'll notice the next word shall the certainty of it then the next word we and ask if we are among them and then this next word ever forever and ever and then with the

Lord and then finally the comfort and the exaltation for the church for every believer to the end of the journey and for the church of God to the end of time where for comfort or exhort one another with these words now the apostle here is speaking primarily to the Thessalonian believers and they were full of grief because they felt that the coming of the Lord was so imminent and those of their number believers in Jesus who had died and been buried would be left out you must remember that with the heathen while there was some thought of spirits and eternity in measure there was never thought of the resurrection of the body

I don't think I need enlarge that point we might just perhaps confirm it in the word in the acts of the apostles where you remember that Paul reasoned at Athens and some mocked as he spake of the resurrection of the dead they mocked others said we'll hear thee again in the matter and speaking to King Agrippa why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead now says the apostle to these Thessalonian believers I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning them which are asleep that ye sorrow not as even as others which have no hope and so as this word was need for to these Thessalonian believers so it is need for to us today for our instruction and for as I say the comfort of our faith again

I venture this we do not wish to be left to any airy vain fanciful speculation God forbid I remember in the last war there were those who wore they immediately said the swastika was the mark of the beast well it was a mark without question but wasn't really the mark we venture only as far as we feel the Holy Spirit directs us but there is such a danger of neglect of this doctrine saying well we are so ignorant we do not understand we are so afraid that we better leave it entirely now I feel we do wrong there I would not say so here we have the scriptural authority and ground for this says the apostle Paul and I believe my brethren with me in the ministry that would unite with me in this we would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning this glorious doctrine concerning them which are asleep now you observe this is a very beautiful description of death it is applicable only to those of the dear people of

God they fall asleep in Jesus you think of Stephen being stoned and how then we read he fell asleep you see why why because there's nothing for the believer to fear from death is there now we do fear when our faith is weak but my friend when the Lord comes and blesses when the Lord visits with his precious salvation applies that precious blood when we have a sweet token of sin forgiven when I say we have that assurance of being justified by his grace clothed in that robe of righteousness then oh death where is thy sting oh grave where is thy victory you see the sting of death the fear of death is sin and the strength of the sin is the law the law that says do this and live break it and die there's no salvation in the law i was i was speaking to my dear people about the dove in the clefts of the rock on the lord's day now there's no clefts of the rock at sin is there but there is at calvary there is in the precious blood of christ and so my friends here as he says i would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning them which are slain the sting of death is removed because sin is forgiven death cannot claim them death can only be the porter as it were to glory the redeemed spirit at death returns to the lord and the body conveyed to the earth or maybe under the sea that redeemed us and it's precious oh my friend isn't it wonderful to think that poor vile sinner should be precious in the eyes of jesus and so precious that he gave himself for them and for them he is made so precious and even that body that is buried that is in corruption and in dissolved dust that's redeemed us it is the apostle paul in the ephesians tells us by the spirit it's the purchased possession the redemption of the purchased possession now you may see there that you have a double redemption double purchase in a way you'll be very careful there's one redemption that's a calvary that's the precious blood that's where the sting of death is removed that's where the grave is robbed of its victory but there's to be a redemption in this that the lord as we're just coming to in a moment is coming from heaven and there's going to be that redeemed dust that's going to rise from the grave and let us look at this for the apostle says for this we say unto you by the word of the lord it is not our fault it is not our vain speculation it is the word of the lord so here let us not be ignorant brethren concerning them which are asleep that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope oh friend how solemn to live and more solemn to die with no hope for

[21 : 25] and this may come closer a false hope are there any among us just resting upon a name a tradition a profession a profession what's that it's a servant of brass that was preserved by Israel to the days of Hezekiah and the poor people started to burn incense to it and Hezekiah ground it to pieces and said it's lihushtan it's only a piece of brass friends solemn if our religion is only lihushtan very solemn but if we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him now this is a very beautiful word are we among those that believe that Jesus died and rose again have we been shown our sin and feel it stripped of all hope in self and emptied and cast upon Christ clinging to

Jesus looking to the Saviour nothing in my hand I bring but simply to thy cross I cling that's the place in his death in the shedding of his blood that fountain open no other plea oh when I come and so often when he's brought my friend to low places depths and trials temptations of Satan the fiery darts of the wicked one I come back to this mercy through blood I make my plea oh God be merciful to me and I believe it will carry me that work of God's grace to heaven at last with all the trials of a wife yes we believe that Jesus died and rose again that his glorious resurrection the empty tomb is the assurance and pledge of the full salvation brought by Jesus Christ at Calvary's cross who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification and that empty tomb

I stood at the graveside some years ago of a dear friend not one of my own people but one of God's dear people and as I concluded the service it came so sweetly that one day that grave would be empty as his was empty because the Lord is coming he's going to come to claim that dust just as the bones of Joseph we read about it three or four times in the scripture Joseph died in Egypt and by faith he gave command concerning his bones that they were to take them up out of Egypt to the promised land it looked as it never would be soon after another king rose up and all the trials of the way and I needn't deny you well know it but the time came by blood they came out and carried those bones up with them so beloved this is the prospect and this is the assurance for God's dear children that one day they shall as our text says be ever with the

Lord but I'm still on this little word soul now how will this be then the apostle says we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep now I feel I stand on safe ground here without any fensible interpretation whatsoever that when the Lord Jesus comes there will be some of his children alive on this earth well if there were none of his people on this earth I don't think this earth would stand because they're the salt of the earth there will be some of his people alive when the Lord shall come that says the apostle they shall not these that will not die will not be buried shall not prevent them that are buried that they are asleep what does that word prevent mean here it's the old

English word it means that they shall not have any preference over or go in front of or have any advantage over it's beautiful you may trace that word prevent out in the scripture in this aspect it's full of instruction for the Lord himself isn't that beautiful aren't those beautiful words I don't want to wander digress too much but it does come to touch my hard heart a little bit when I think of the gospel and when we read of Jesus himself oh friend that he's going to come I remember a dear old man once said he loves them so dearly that he's going to come himself for them and so he will Jesus himself when the Lord ascended into heaven you remember that they looked up there were the angels and there was this testimony this same

[27 : 45] Jesus why stand you looking up into heaven for this same Jesus that going up into heaven shall come in light manner as you see him go up into heaven we stand I'm sure brethren on safe ground thus far scriptural ground soul comforting ground strengthening ground this is what the church of God should be looking for with sweet anticipation longing desires joyful spirits at times I know there's much to sink us I know there's much to cast us down but my friend we lose sight of this glorious truth that the kingdom as we read in I think Obadiah is the Lord's fear not little flock it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom he shall descend from heaven it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment so

Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many that unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation that many is very precious but am I among them are you among them well now it is to them that look for him and those that look for him will be those that have looked to him those who have suffered bitten have looked to Calvary those with no hope in self have turned their eyes to Jesus those whose eyes have been opened see their sin behold their saviour see the preciousness of that precious blood and he shall come the second time without sin not that he came with sin as a sinner he was sinless but sin was laid on him charged to him but it be without sin because that full payment was made at

Calvary it's without sin unto salvation to the end of your faith even the salvation of your souls to bring his church into the blessedness the fullness the enjoyment forever everlasting heaven itself he shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God oh what a shout it would be I remember my dear pastor once having buried a friend in a little corner in Tunbridge Wells where so many of the saints are buried and he said my boy he used to often call me my buddy there'll be a shout here so there will and there'll be one here too he will come the saviour my friend and the earth will give up the bodies of the redeemed it will and the

Lord himself and the dead in Christ shall rise as they've died in Christ and Christ loved them and gave himself for them then we which are alive he turns back to those that shall not taste death we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the class this is beautiful you see in a moment in the twinkling of an eye we shall all be changed he shall fashion our glorious body like under his glorious body that corruption shall put up incorruption and honour and glory it be in the twinkling of an eye oh friend change from glory into glory till in heaven we take our place till we cast our crowns before thee lost in wonder love and praise think of it this new creature this work of

God's grace this which will be performed and I say my friend though on this earth we have this flesh though we groan being in this tavern we groan being burdened but then forever free from infirmity and sin on earth the believer groans oh wretched man that I am who should deliver me from the body of this death but then the redeemed soul will welcome that body because it is now sinless holy glorious incorruptible like Christ together together always wonderful you think of it we've sung in the opening hymn of all gathered from all countries and kindreds you think of those you've known and loved

[33 : 19] I do not mention last Monday but our minds moved that way very much we go back over and some of you think of dear ones now in heaven some on earth in glory some severed only till he come that death itself shall never sever from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord together is one church is the bride of Christ and they shall walk with me in white three thoughts there white signifies immortality white signifies purity not not a spot not a blemish not a stain and white to the

Jew seeking eyes joy garments of white were worn on festival days of joy and my and my friend it will be everlasting joy together what a prospect with them in the clouds now the devil is called the prince of the power of the air but the lord is going to gather his church his bride in the very realm where satan reigns complete conqueror victor over all the powers of darkness to meet the lord in the air and so in this way shall there's no better adventure reign now you say is it there reigns well let me just and very briefly turn to the beginning of this epistle where the apostle says that his entering in unto those believers had not been in vain now what rights if we know with tenderness say it had paul to say that well he says this that when that word came it came first not in word only but in power in the holy ghost and with much assurance that was one mark the next was that you turn from idols to serve the living and true god and to wait for his son whom he jesus whom he raised from the dead who delivered us from the wrath to come the work of god's grace seen in your heart was the word came with power it entered right into your heart and that power turned you from idols from evil from sin and turned you to god so we have regeneration we have effectual calling and we have conversion and i believe in that order the work of god is the work of his grace the new birth from above that's first life and then light and where there's life there's the ear for the effectual calling and when there's life there's a turning to god but there will be no turning to god without spiritual life and light in the soul and the apostle gives another witness look he says there is the work of your faith the labour of your love and the patience of your hope the faith love and hope there wasn't just faith in the head it was in the heart our dear friend reminded us of it on monday didn't he oh how many there are with a head religion i dread that dread it i want it in my heart i want it there and never be removed i believe it is there and that work of faith it doesn't mean to say that we work our way to heaven by what we're doing for jesus no but it does mean that faith is going to be an active grace in the soul it's going to struggle it's going to strive it's when you're burdened with sin it's going to work and look to jesus when you go through trials and testings it's going to live though much else will go and the same with love it's not just a nominal love many can kiss and there's no meaning in it at all but my friend this labor of love this love of christ filling your heart will empty you it will bring you to the place of nothingness of self you'll see the more you know this love to love jesus and then you'll love one another you'll love the people of god you'll bear their burdens you'll feel for their sorrows it's a labor and hope

it's not just the anchor isn't an ornament for the ship it's to hold the ship i'm sure that many cables are broken man made of literal boats and they've sunk but the cable that holds the soul the links my friend and the anchor is in heaven it's in christ and he will hold me fast oh love that will not let me go so shall we ever forever and ever eternally be with the lord thou shalt see my glory soon partner of thy the throne shall be say poor sinner and love thou me oh friend what a prospect with the lord with him to be like him to sing his praise unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood come let us join our cheerful songs with angels round the throne ten thousand thousand are their tongues but all their joys are one worthy the lamb that died they cried to be exalted thus worthy the lamb our lips reply that he was slain for us there's something very sacred very solemn very blessed very confirming in the death of the saint we must be careful not all leave a deathbed testimony they didn't in the bible they didn't in the bible but they left the walk the witness the mark but it has pleased god we think of dear jacob i've waited for thy salvation we think of stephen as another as he fell asleep in jesus we think of paul i know wasn't exactly dead but right at the end i'm now ready to be offered the time of my departure is at hand i fought a good fight i kept the faith and so on and there's laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the lord the righteous judge forgive me in that day and not to me only but to all them also that love is appearing my own mind goes back to the deathbed of my pastor and my father my dear old deacon of tamworth row dear old friend russell oh friend to see the death of the saint it's falling asleep there's no fear my pastor said i die and the strength of the truth that by god's grace i preached my father spoke to me about the arrangement of his funeral as though he and i were going to take the service together even to the extent of deciding a tune to go to the hymn utter peace and quiet just ready to go dear old friend russell was called back to him i visited him after the service on a sunday night the dear old deacon and suddenly he was taken worse and i was called straight way back the dear old man said i'm going don't pray that the lord will keep me i'm waiting longing to go like dear old jacob he gathered his feet up and dead and he was gone taken to glory and you can testify i say when i say this are the many that we buried that we know they have not been able to leave a word but they have it's a beautiful word

in the song of Solomon when the lord comes down into his garden to gather lilies and i've sometimes thought of this you've been in your garden there's been that beautiful row you've stooped and sent and perhaps you've taken your secateurs you've cut it off you've taken it indoors you've put it in the vase the house is filled with the scent or the room is but it soon dies the scent is gone but with the dear people of God the sweet aroma lingers whose faith follows that there's something very very precious isn't that something so very very real now i must come briefly to the last point wherefore comfort one another with these words when you're ready to give up when you're so tempted and trying when you're in the dark when you're in depression may the lord help us to comfort one another that jesus will bring us through lo i'm with you all way even unto the end of the world and i'm no stranger to darkness or sadness or sadness and but real religion mighty grace our dear jesus holds us up doesn't he he'll bring us through comfort one another with these words that this is the prospect the best is yet to be comfort and then exalt you see we can get slack we can get sleepy we can get fatalistic we can get luke worn we can be unconcerned almost and exalt one another they that sleep sleep in the night and they that be drunken be drunken in the night and we may say ah

I don't touch drink like that I never drunk friend we can be intoxicated with something else some pleasure of this life we can have our senses stupefied can't we don't we need to watch and to pray and the devil won't go to sleep when we grow old either you think of the kings those godly kings the sad blemishes that were in the even tide of night is a warning always to us right to the end of the journey right till we are brought into our desired haven there are dangers and there are perils so exhort one another when one's love grows cold when one is in a wrong spirit and when one is unkind think friend what you're doing he's coming he may come would you be able to meet him if he saw if he came and you were doing that thing in that company that you were in or in that spirit in which we were in you see this is how we should live this is the teaching here exhort one another and how clearly this is set before us in the following chapter warn them that they're unruly that they need discipline they're breaking the rank warn them but what about the feeble minded scorn them slap them on the back and say well all you've got to do is believe no comfort them encourage them you one day may be feeble minded you may be thankful for some kind friend to speak a word to you to encourage you you see the feeble minded will see fear every step won't they and they need a fear knot and then support the weak one day you'll be thankful

[46 : 59] I don't want to just come to my mind I hope my dear friend won't mind me just naming this but he just asked me to take his arm at the graveside I'm a poor thing but it was just a little support now I use that as an illustration if you got a friend and we all fell for our dear friend do now now we would try to support them it may be in a practical way it may be a word it may be a visit it may be a give all done in love and if it's none of those it will be in prayer support the weak be patient toward all men and see that none render evil for evil unto any man that ever follow that which is good both among yourselves and to all men now I must close wherefore comfort one another with these words heaven and earth says

Jesus shall pass away but my word shall not pass away we know not what the future is but peace perfect peace the future all unknown Jesus I know and he's on the throne what dark scenes may rise what evils may abound on this earth but beloved your life is hid with Christ in God it is well well for life well for death well for eternity I prayed if my mind should be conscious at the end to be enabled to say this as I draw last breath in peace let me resign my breath and thy salvation say my sins deserve eternal death but

Jesus died for me Amen