

Death-Defying Hope

Sunday, July 21, 2024 ▪ Brad Manley

Jesus' death and resurrection assure the future life and blessing of _____ believers. (vv. 13-14)

At Jesus' return believers who have died will be _____ resurrected. (vv. 15-16)

All who are living at the time of Jesus' return will be forever _____ with resurrected believers and the Lord. (vv. 17-18)

Thessalonians 4:13-18

- ¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.
- ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.
- ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.
- ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.
- ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.
- ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words. (ESV)

Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions

Open: What fears do you have about death?

Read & Discuss: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1. Paul says that believers do not grieve the death of a loved one as unbelievers do (v. 13). In what ways should a Christian's grief over the death of a loved one be different from that of an unbeliever? Though our grief is meant to be different than the grief of unbelievers, should Christians still grieve the death of a loved one? Why or why not?
2. As Paul addresses the Thessalonians, he reminds them of Jesus' resurrection, which proves that Jesus can also resurrect His followers (v. 14). How does Christ's resurrection shape your fears about death? What are some ways in which you still struggle to rest in the assurances that the Gospel provides regarding death?
3. Paul's writing of this section of his letter was prompted by the fact that the Thessalonian believers were concerned that those among them who had died might miss out on Christ's return. In order, what events does Paul identify in verses 15-17? According to verse 16 the "dead in Christ will rise first." How should this have been especially encouraging for the Thessalonian believers?
4. This passage is often used to support the idea that believers will be raptured (taken up) from the earth before the tribulation begins. Others think this will not take place until the end of the tribulation, just before Jesus returns to earth. As you consider the sequence of events described in verses 15-17, do you see anything that indicates when the rapture might occur in connection with other end-time events? How important do you think it is to have a clear answer on this?
5. The result of this gathering of believers in verse 17 is that, from this point on, all believers will always be with the Lord. How would Paul's words have been an encouragement to the concerns of the Thessalonians? What does this tell us about what we can anticipate regarding future human relationships?
6. Why do you think Paul gave these believers the responsibility to encourage one another with the truths of this passage (v. 18)? Have you had opportunity to use the promise of Jesus' return and our eternal union with Him with someone who was grieving? Explain.

Personal Reflection and Application: How do Paul's words here serve as an encouragement to you? How could you use Paul's words to encourage someone else?

Pray: Thank God for the promise that one day Christ will return and that all believers can look forward to being in the presence of the Lord forever. Pray that we'll be faithful to encourage each other with this promise as we await that day.