

Bible Study for February 28th and March 2nd

Apparently Paul had heard that the Christians in Thessalonica had grown concerned over their loved ones who had died since believing in Christ, perhaps due to persecution.

The Goal of Paul's Instruction, vv. 13 & 18.

Paul's goal is to inform, to instruct, but to instruct in order to give hope that the believers in Thessalonica might grieve with hope.

He doesn't want them to be ignorant/uninformed. [Sound Theology]

About those who are asleep (dead). Some teach soul-sleep based on this passage, i.e., that the souls of believers are in a state of hibernation until the resurrection of the body. However, this is not biblical for the following reasons:

- Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Today, you will be with me in Paradise."
- Paul said it was better to depart and be with Christ than to live.
- Paul said that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.
- Also, Jesus said of the little girl who He was about to raise from the dead, "The girl is not dead but asleep." Meaning the state was temporary.
- Also, of Lazarus Jesus said to His disciples: "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died."

Sleep is used in the Bible for death to emphasize its temporary nature. The souls of all those who die as believers in Christ go immediately to be with the Lord. Their bodies are buried, but that state is temporary.

He doesn't tell them not to grieve, but not to grieve as others do who don't have hope. There should be something different about the way we weep and grieve at a funeral and at the loss of a loved one. There is!

In 1871 the great Chicago fire virtually ruined Horatio Spafford. Two years later, in 1873, Spafford put his wife and his four daughters on a ship to sail for England and the ship runs into another ship and sinks very quickly, and all four girls died and his wife barely escapes. He hears about the accident and he receives a telegram from his wife: "Saved. Alone."

Spafford gets on a ship and heads to be with his grieving wife and as he passes over the part of the ocean where the girls went down and were at the bottom, he wrote, "When peace like a river attendeth my way or sorrows like sea billows roll. Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, 'It is well, it is well with my soul.'"

The Gospel Basis of the Saint's Hope, v. 14.

The basis for our hope is in the central truth of the gospel that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead. This is the truth that baptism symbolizes. It also symbolizes our future resurrection which is guaranteed by the death and resurrection of Christ.

It was the truth of the gospel which gave to Hortatio Spafford the ability to say that "It is well with my soul" in the darkest trial of his life. Remember the third stanza,

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and Thursday in Capitol Annex Room
436 from 11:30 am till noon. It is the
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flexibility for committee schedules.**

My sins, oh the bliss, of this glorious thought / My sins, not in part, but the whole
Are nailed to the cross and I bear them no more / Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! O my soul!
It is well with my soul!

The Glorious Details of Christ's Return, vv. 15-17.

Our great hope is to be united with the Lord! All Christians agree up to this point. All Christians believe in the personal return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead unto eternal life. But from this point on some Christians disagree on the exact order of the events that follow. Will Christ now take all believers to back to heaven with Him or will He bring them back to earth in a victory parade? Paul doesn't tell us here. That is for other texts and other sermons, but I like where Paul ends it. "So we will always be with the Lord." It's as if Paul is saying, "Nothing else matters. Who cares?!?"

No wonder Horatio Spafford said,

O Lord haste the day, when my faith shall be sight! / The clouds will be rolled back as a scroll

The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend / Even so, it is well with my soul!

Conclusion

We know the story of Horatio Spafford and "It is Well with My Soul," but the message of the gospel and the assurance of Christ's return is still giving hope to God's people today. In 2008, tragedy struck the home of Christian singer and song-writer Steven Curtis Chapman when one of his teenage sons accidentally ran over and killed their five year old daughter.

This is not at all / How we thought it was supposed to be
We had so many plans for you / We had so many dreams
But now you've gone away / And left us with the memories of your smile
And nothing we can say / And nothing we can do
Can take away the pain / The pain of losing you

And we can cry with hope / We can say good-bye with hope
'Cause we know our good-bye is not the end / And we can grieve with hope
'Cause we believe with hope / There's a place where we'll see your face again

And never have I known / Anything so hard to understand
And never have I questioned more / The wisdom of God's plan
But through the cloud of tears / I see the Father smile and say 'well done.'
And I imagine you / Where you wanted most to be
Seeing all your dreams come true / 'Cause now you're home
And now you're free

We have this hope as an anchor
'Cause we believe that everything
God promised us is true

We wait with hope / And we ache with hope
We hold on with hope / We let go with hope

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We can grieve with hope because we know our good-byes are not the end! We can grieve with hope because we believe that everything God promised us is true! These truths are still encouraging God's people.