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LEADERSHIP DURING DIFFICULT DAYS

HOPE IN OUR REUNION

1THESSALONIANS 4:15-18

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain 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 shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Hope for the Believer transcends the worldview of the non-believer. Peter reminds us that our salvation provides a "living hope" not a no life dead hope. Biblical hope is a desire of some good with an earnest expectation of obtaining it. Hope in Scripture is the absolute certainty of future good.

Scripture for the believer describes our hope in comforting ways...

- Living Hope (1Peter 1:3)
- Blessed Hope (Titus 2:13)
- Joyful Hope (1Thess 2:19)
- Comforting Hope (1Thess 4:13-18)
- Hope Of Glory (Col 1:27)
- Anchoring Hope (Heb 6:19)
- Purifying Hope (1John 3:3)

The ultimate culmination is Jesus "Christ *who is* our hope" (1 Timothy 1:1).

However, the unbeliever express no hope.

Ephesians 2:12 Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Aeschylus Wrote, "Once a man dies there is no resurrection."

Theocritus rightly summarized the hope of all outside Christ and still "in Adam" (and responsible to pay for the wages of sin which is death) wrote There is hope for those who are alive, but those who have died are without hope.

Catullus concludes this tragic refrain...When once our brief light sets, there is one perpetual night through which we must sleep. (Comment: Unfortunately, this is only partially correct, for in hell there is full consciousness not perpetual sleep. (read Luke 16:19-32)

Lucretius wrote that...No one awakes and arises who has once been overtaken by the chilling end of life.

One pagan tombstones reads this hopeless grim epitaphs...I was not, I became, I am not, I care not.

This is exactly what the Apostle Paul was addressing. Someone had come in the assembly and taught that the "Day of the Lord had already come" (2 Thess 2:1-5) and they had missed the Rapture and their reunion with their loved ones, causing hopelessness.

When Paul preached the doctrine of the resurrection to the Athenian philosophers, most of them mocked him (Acts 17:32). To the Greeks, *being rid of the body* was their great hope. Why would any man want to have his body resurrected? Furthermore, *how* could his body be resurrected, when the elements of the body would decay and become a part of the earth?

To them the doctrine of resurrection was foolish and impossible.¹

God has overlooked such times of ignorance, he now commands all people everywhere to repent, Acts 17:31 because he has set a day on which he is going to judge the world in righteousness, by a man whom he designated, having provided proof to all by raising him from the dead.

Paul had to reiterate his apostolic message concerning the "Day of the Lord." The false teachers and their teaching has filtered into the church of Thessalonica causing some to become "shaken" in their adherence to his authoritative message previously given to this assembly.

Hope was lacking because they had forgotten Paul's message and teaching concerning the death of believers and the sequence and future reunion of loved-ones who had died in Christ.

FB Meyer provide this devotional thought on the death of loved-ones and our hope of our reuniting with them at the appearing of Christ and saints who have died in Christ as they appear with Him at His "coming" (παρουσία).

NATURE will have her due. Tears will fall, and hearts seem near to breaking. Nowhere does God chide the tears of natural affection; how could He, since it is written that "Jesus wept"? But He sets Himself to extract their bitterness. Sorrow you may, and must; but not as without hope.

Those who die in Christ are with Him.--They are said to sleep, not because they are unconscious, but because their decease was as devoid of terror as an infant's slumbers. Believers have all died once in Christ, and it was necessary to find a word which, whilst significant of death, was not death, in order to describe the moment of our farewell to this world and birth into the next. This word was furnished by Death's twin sister Sleep. The

catacombs are covered with the brief significant sentence, Obdormivit in Christo (He slept in Christ). But just as in sleep the spirit is conscious, of which dreams bear witness, so in the last sleep. Absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord.

Those who die in Christ will come with Him.--They are now waiting around Him till He give the final order for the whole heavenly cortege, which has been collecting for ages, to move. The holy angels will accompany; but the beloved saints shall ride in the chariots of God as the bride beside the bridegroom.

Those who die in Christ shaft (shall) be forever reunited with us who wait for Him and them.--They shall come with Him. "God will bring them." We, on the other hand, if we are living at that supreme moment, shall be changed and caught up to meet Him and them; and then, all one m (in) Christ, we shall be forever with Him, to go no more out. **F B Meyer:** note on 1Thessalonians 4:13.

God is not the god of confusion, but the God of order. There is a purpose for His appearing and our gathering together with Him when He appears. Ultimate hope, this side of the cross and prior to His return, must cause us to rejoice in Him and our reunion with our loved-one who have died prior to His return.

Just as the risen Christ, our hope Who was raised from the dead, so too we will be in His likeness when we see Him face-to-face. (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

What is your spiritual status? Do you have loved-one who have passed on before you? Where is your earthly hope? My prayer is that the gospel has changed your life! Has it? if not, please do not hesitate to contact me. As I visit with you, I pray you would allow me to serve you and pray for you.

LEGISLATIVE BIBLE STUDY

Blatt Rm. 317—Wednesday, 8:30am

Prayer Request-jeff.lingerfelt@capitolcom.org

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Ready*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1979, p. 87.