

## 1Thessalonians, Chapter Four, Lesson Three

COMFORTING BEHAVIOR 1Thessalonians 4:13-18

### STIMULATE

\*\* When we began our study of chapter four in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, we learned about our "**Sanctified Behavior**" towards God and our "**Proper Behavior**" towards the lost around us; which was best displayed by how we show love to one another as Christians and by leading a quiet life, attending to our own business, and working with our own hands.

Hopefully we have remained aware of the importance of living a Godly life before the watching unsaved world so that they may come to a knowledge of the truth. What they learn about our God comes from seeing Him in our lives!

### MOTIVATE

\*\* Today's study will complete chapter four and show us the need for Christians to demonstrate "**Comforting Behavior**" between one another. In this very unique passage, Paul is going to answer some very difficult questions for the Thessalonians and give us the secret behind true comfort! Before we get into our passage, let's define an important term. What does "**eschatology**" mean?

A theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of mankind. A study of end time events.

\*\* What are the events of human history that the Bible says are yet to take place?

1. The Rapture
2. The Tribulation
  - a. God's Judgements
    1. Seven Seals - Revelation, chapter 5
    2. Seven Trumpets - Revelation, chapter 8
    3. Seven Bowls - Revelation, chapter 16
  - b. Armageddon - Revelation 16:16, 14:17-20
3. The Bema Seat Judgement of Christ
4. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb
5. The Second Coming of Christ
6. Satan is bound
7. The Millennial Kingdom
8. The Final Great White Throne judgement
9. Eternity Future, the New Heaven and Earth

\*\* What are we to do with this information?

Let's read our passage and find the joyful answer to that very important question.

Read passage (V.13-15) (V.16-18)

Opening Prayer

*Comforting Behavior*

## INVESTIGATE

**V.13** \*\* Remembering what we learned from our last study in verse eleven, what were some of the behavioral problems which were being experienced by some of the Thessalonians?

Some of them were:

1. "unbalanced" - not leading a quiet life.
2. busybodies.
3. lazy and not working.

\*\* What was at the core of their disobedience?

Their misunderstanding of eschatology! They did not understand end time events, so their lives became dysfunctional!

\*\* Here in verse 13, does Paul want them to remain confused or ignorant of the facts?

No - "...we do not want you to be uninformed..."

\*\* What was one of the specific areas of confusion for the Christians in Thessalonica?

"...about those who are asleep..." They did not know what happened to those Christians who had "fallen asleep" prior to the Lord's return.

\*\* What does Paul mean by "fallen asleep"?

He is referring to those Christians who had died.  
cf. 1Corinthians 11:30, All see - John 11:5-7, 11-14

\*\* What was the emotional response of the Thessalonians to the reality that some of them had died?

They were "grieving"!

\*\* While Christians can grieve the loss of a loved one, simply because they will miss them, they should not grieve as those "who have no hope". Who are they?

The unsaved world around us! cf. Ephesians 2:1, 12

**V.14** \*\* What cause for hope does Paul give to the Thessalonians regarding those Christians who had died?

Because Jesus Christ died and rose again (a proven fact), God will bring with Christ those who have died in Him at his Second Coming.

\*\* What does the phrase "died in Jesus" mean, who are these people?

Those who are born again through faith in Jesus Christ, who lived their lives in subjection to Him and died holding fast to the faith - which was once for all delivered to the saints.  
cf. 2Corinthians 5:17 and Romans 16:3, 7, 9, 10

**V.15** \*\* It was wonderful news to hear that even the dead in Christ would be with Him at His Second Coming, but how was that going to happen? What needed to take place first?

The "Rapture" - the church needs to be with Christ, before it can join Him in His Second Coming.

\*\* As Paul begins his instruction on the critical issue, from where does he get his information?

"...by the word of the Lord..."

\*\* In all four of the gospel records, you will not find Jesus teaching on this specific subject. So how can Paul say this is the "word of the Lord"?

The apostle is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told Paul, and Paul is passing on the information. It simply was not recorded in the gospels. cf. John 21:25

Verses 15-17 are describing for the Thessalonians (and us as well) an event known theologically as "**The Rapture**". Let's compare that event with the **Second Coming** of Christ.

**The Rapture** - Read 1Thessalonians 4:15-17

cf. 1Corinthians 15:50-58 and John 14:1-3

In these three passages, the Lord Himself separates Christians out from among non-believers and removes them from the earth (or receives them to Himself).

### **The Second Coming**

cf. Matthew 13:37-42 - Angels will gather out sinners

Matthew 13:47-50 - Angels take out the wicked

Matthew 24:37-42 - "one left standing" to enter the Millennial Kingdom.

At the **Second Coming** of Jesus Christ, God will remove all of the "stumbling blocks", leaving only those who had become believers during the Tribulation to enter into His Millennial Kingdom.

Let's look together at the Book of Revelation, to help us better understand the eschatology regarding these two events.

Chapters 1-3 Address the Church Age

Chapters 4-19 Describe the Tribulation

Chapter 20 Is the Millennial Kingdom

Chapters 21-22 Introduce Eternity Future

\*\* According to chapter one, verse three, what is the potential impact of this book?

It is a blessing, if you read, hear and heed the truth that it contains. cf. Luke 11:28

\*\* Found in verse four, to whom is this letter written?

Seven real churches in Asia, which stand for all time as examples of churches everywhere.

\*\* In chapter three, verse seven, Jesus writes through the pen of the apostle John to the church at Philadelphia. This is the only church not given a warning, they were a truly faithful group of believers. What does Christ say to them regarding the Tribulation in verse ten?

"...I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world..." cf. John 17:15 (tereo ek)

Worthy to note: From chapters 4-18, there is no mention of the church. After giving specific instruction to the seven churches in chapters 1-3 on how they are to live in their present day, John goes silent regarding any reference of the church during the Tribulation.

His only instruction is to Israel, most notably pointed out in chapter 7:4-8 where 12,000 from each tribe are sealed making up the 144,000 witnesses for Christ.

When we compare the Book of Revelation with what we saw in John 14:1-3, you have Christ "receiving to Himself", His church in the Rapture prior to the Tribulation and then returning with her by His side in Revelation 19 at His Second Coming, at the end of the Tribulation.

### **V.16-17**

\*\* Back in 1Thessalonians 4:16 we see the Lord descending from heaven to receive to Himself, first the dead in Christ and then we who are alive (V.17). Does he meet us on earth?

No, that would be His **Second Coming!** We are caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord.

"Caught up" translates the word *harpazo* which means literally, "to seize, catchup or snatch away". Christ is removing us from the earth in this verse, not bringing us down to it!

\*\* After this glorious event, how long are we with the Lord?

"...and thus we shall always be with the Lord". From that moment on, we remain with Christ throughout eternity.

**V.18** \*\* If we were not committed to applying the word of God to our daily walk, this study could easily produce only head knowledge for us all. However, what does Paul want the Thessalonians to do with this very important information regarding the **Rapture**?

"...comfort one another with these words." Some of them were very confused or shaken over the loss of their loved ones and God's word is the only thing that can comfort their aching hearts.

\*\* Herein lies the secret we spoke of at the beginning of our study. If we are to display "**Comforting Behavior**" towards our fellow saints, what should we use to comfort them during their times of grief and confusion.

Quite simply, the Word of God! We follow Paul's pattern and address their need from God's word.

\*\* What events in human history must take place before the **Rapture** of the church can happen?

Nothing! The stage is set, the next major event in the history of man is the **Rapture!** We need to be faithful and ready for when our gracious Lord comes to take us with Him to heaven.

### **EXTRICATE**

\*\* How does understanding this passage help prepare you to display "**Comforting Behavior**" toward your fellow Christians?

It should encourage my own heart with the reality that Jesus Christ is in control and is coming for me. I can now comfort others with this same wonderful news.

### **DELINEATE**

\*\* What error did the Thessalonians make in verse 13, which we need to avoid at all costs?

They grieved as those who have no hope, not understanding Christ's provision of the **Rapture** for His beloved Church. cf. 2Corinthians 5:6-8

### **EVALUATE**

\*\* How can I specifically use what we have learned together today?

Share it with others -

1. Edify my fellow Christians.
2. Witness to the lost.

### **ACTIVATE**

\*\* We need to live our lives this next week in the light of Christ's imminent return for His church. Sharing with others and obeying our Master by honoring Him with our "**Comforting Behavior**".

Closing Prayer