

A Sure and Certain Hope

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[0 : 00] Christ is risen, the Lord is risen indeed, hallelujah. My name is George Sinclair. For those of you who are watching this and aren't familiar with the church, I'm going to be opening God's Word, and it's in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, if you want to get your own Bibles and follow along.

It's allergy season, I'm allergic to just about everything, and so you'll hear that a little bit in my voice. But just before we get into it, excuse me, let's just pray.

Father, we thank you that we can be gathered around your Word, and we ask that the Holy Spirit would fall with gentle but deep power upon every single one of us who are entering in to this time through these electronic means. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. I'm going to, oh, I have to start my time. I'm going to share with you a funeral text. And in the context of, it's a text, if you've gone to a Christian funeral, it's one of several texts which is often read. And I'm going to read that for us on Easter morning. It's 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verses 13 and 18. And I'm going to share with you my hope as a Christian in the face of great loss and in the face of death.

And there can be no greater loss than death, can there? So here's the text, and then we're going to get into it and talk about it, etc. Deal with your questions, hopefully, and why it's relevant to your life. But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

[1 : 54] 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. 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. 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. Therefore, encourage one another with these words. And Christians would say in Anglican church, this is the word of the Lord, and you would say, thanks be to God. So one of the neat things about doing this, I mean, it would be so much nicer to just be, not be live via this type of media, but to be live with you in a room, worshiping together.

One of the things which is really very, very good about this is I know that, I mean, I'm going to share with you my hope in the face of death as a Christian. And I know that there are probably people watching in amongst us who are maybe believers or followers or inquirers into some of the great religions, historic religions of the world. And I know that there are some of you who are practicing and pursuing a type of bespoke or curated type of spirituality, putting together elements that are meaningful to you from a wide range of sources. And I know that there are those of you who are watching this who would say that, you know, there is no God. There is no type of spirituality that really is real. If it makes you happy, it makes you happy. But if you were really a smart person, if you were a good critical thinker, you'd know that there is nothing like this. When you die, you die. So I know that all of you are living, are listening. Some of you who have these different views are watching. And I just want to share with you my particular faith as a Christian in the face of death. I guess if you want, you can email me. We can have a conversation for some of you who have different ways of understanding death. I'd love to enter into a conversation with you about that if I can.

But I'm going to share with you my hope as a Christian in the face of death. So you might say, okay, George, you just read that text. And I don't know, like it didn't do anything for me. Like, just be honest, George, it didn't do anything at all for me. And that would be a fair, a fair comment. You might understand, you might wonder why on earth a text like this would give me any particular hope. Well, it makes a bit of a difference if you understand the context.

You know, I read this out of a book that looks all fancy and all that type of stuff. It doesn't look like an ordinary type of book. But this actually is what I read from you is what I read for you is a letter that was written by a man named Paul to a group of Christians, most of whom had been pagans, not Jewish beforehand, who became Christians. And the letter is written around the year 50, around the year 50. So it's written, depending on how you date the death and resurrection of Jesus, there's, if you read the historical counts of the death of Jesus, there's so many connections to other historical personages that you can date the death and resurrection of Jesus to either being the spring of the year 30 or the spring of the year 33. And it's a very interesting thing, this letter, actually, because this is the second place in Europe that people have shared about Christianity. [5 : 35] I mean, this is the very, very, very origins of European Christianity, or at least Christianity in Europe. In just a little bit earlier in the book of Acts, you actually have the historical account of how the very first Christians showed up in Europe. They didn't come with armies, they didn't come with power. In fact, nobody even acknowledged that this remarkable thing had happened that the first Christians had come to Europe. And it was in a place in Greece, that we now call it Greece, and it was a place called Philippi. And after they had some problems there, rather than being welcomed or showing overwhelming power, or all of the thought leaders instantly welcoming them, the thought leaders had them, and the business leaders and the religious leaders had had these early Christians thrown in jail.

And when they finally got out of jail, there's a whole story about that, they sort of keep going. They don't go back out of Europe. They don't say, well, that's the end of that. They go to this other place called Thessalonica. And there they start proclaiming this remarkable news. They proclaim the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. Remember, this is 17 to 20 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. And in that place, many people come to believe them as they give the reason and the arguments and etc. for the reality of the resurrection of Jesus. Once again, a great persecution arises.

Paul and some of his other traveling companions have to leave. And so they write this letter back to the church. So all of this is very, very significant, if you think about it, because these men are proclaiming that a man by the name of Jesus from Nazareth had died by crucifixion, and on the third day rose from the dead. And these people that Paul was originally talking to, they would know all about crucifixion.

Over the course of the Roman Empire, hundreds of thousands of people were crucified. And did you know that apart from this account of Jesus, which is resurrection, there's only one known case in all of history of a person surviving crucifixion? It didn't last very long, and there were doctors and others present, and the man was unbelievably beat up. But out of hundreds of thousands of crucifixions, only one man in recorded history survived it. And that was after not having been crucified for very long. So it's very remarkable that these men would be proclaiming that this particular thing happened at a time when people could go back, they could talk, they could look at the tomb, they could look at all of these things and check out the evidence. And it's even more remarkable when you understand who's reading the letter. You see, if you know anything about the history of this particular man named Paul, he was a terrible man. He was what we would call a religious fanatic. He was completely and utterly believing in his own understanding of Judaism. And he persecuted people who left that in the least little way. And he would have had nothing to do whatsoever with people who weren't Jews.

But something changed in his life. He met the resurrected Jesus. And he went from being a person who was a profound persecutor of the early Christians, and a profound hater of those who were not Jews. He went from that to being a man who was the fellow who first brought the message of Jesus's death and resurrection to Europe. To those very same people that he would have hated and despised, he now risks his life to tell them about this unbelievably wonderful, I shouldn't say unbelievably, because I believe it, this spectacularly, wonderfully good news that a man by the name of Jesus had died by crucifixion and risen from the dead. And in fact, this very same man, Paul, would eventually die a horrible, painful death at the hand of the Roman emperor. And he didn't die just for a cause or just for a movement or for his ideology or for politics. He died because he maintained that a certain fact was undeniably true. He died for the proclamation that there was a man named Jesus who lived a particular type of life, who lived in a very particular city, ministered in a very particular region.

[9 : 54] And he died by crucifixion at Roman hands. And on the third day, he rose from the dead. And it was for that very fact that he would die a painful death and he would have been spared it if he had just said, nah, nah, just joking. Let's move on. No, he went to his death. And so that is why this is, in fact, profoundly good news. And if you look, you'll be able to see this first point.

Good news, just outside of Jerusalem in the spring of 30 or 33, Jesus died by crucifixion on a Friday and was resurrected on Sunday. Good news, just outside of Jerusalem in the spring of 30 or 33, Jesus died by crucifixion on a Friday and was resurrected on Sunday. And that, you see, is, we're going to talk more about it, but that's the basis of my hope. I'm not by nature an optimistic man. I'm being transformed by the Christian hope to be a more hopeful man. But by nature, I'm not very optimistic. And I don't believe in the resurrection because of butterflies or spring and all of that type of stuff or some complicated philosophical argument. I believe my hope in the face of death is rooted in the real defeat of death by Jesus of Nazareth. That is my hope in the face of death and in the face of all loss. That is my hope. Okay. So some of you are saying, George, okay, let's say it's true. And by the way, if you haven't checked it out, most people just assume it's not true. They've never looked into the evidence. You look at our church, look at my Easter letter. I give you some resources that you can look to about some of the ways you can begin to look into the historical thing, the historical facts. But some of you say, okay, George, well, let's just say that's true, that that actually happened. All it means is something weird happened. Like big deal. Like you want to know about weird things that happened? Read about quantum physics where particles both before and after, like just, you can read all sorts of things about weird facts. It's just a weird fact. Like it doesn't mean anything. That's a very, very, very good point. So this, this so what question is completely valid. It really is. But, but let's look again at what Paul said here. Look again at verse 14. Actually, we'll begin at verse 13 and then we'll get to verse 14. But we do not want you to be uninformed brothers and sisters about those who are asleep. That's a way of referring to those who are dead. That you may not grieve as others who have no hope. In other words, not that you stop grieving, but that you grieve in the context of hope. And here's the reason. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. In the original language, there's a very odd thing, usually not translated in English. And it has to do with the through him. And it goes like this. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. And it's this idea that somehow or another, well, here it's, they experience death through Jesus or in Jesus. You see, here's the thing. We all know that death is inevitable.

[13 : 36] We don't tend to think about it very much, but death, in fact, is inevitable and is the greatest loss that you can have. I mean, some of you have heard me speak before. I have this line. It's from Flannery O'Connor, a really quirky Southern writer of about 50, 60, 70 years ago. And she said, you can't be poorer than dead. And I don't know what the stock market crash, Bill Gates might have lost, you know, I don't know how many, maybe 10 billion, I don't know how many billions he lost, but he loses everything the second he dies. And so in a sense, we know the inevitability of death.

And it's within this context of this very, very great loss that Paul talks about this remarkable thing. Here's the point, and then I'll explain it. Good news, by trust in him, the Lord Jesus Christ will enter into a union with you that even death cannot break. Good news, by trust in him, the Lord Jesus Christ will enter into a union with you, an ordinary person like you and me, that even death cannot break. You see, that's the significance of these things. You've fallen asleep through Jesus. The implication is, and as we'll see in a moment with the other part of the passage, that their union with Christ continues even in death and even after death. Their union with Jesus continues. You see, here's how we would understand it. You know, there's no greater basis of human rights and human dignity.

We as a culture have a profound belief in human autonomy and the importance of human freedom and the importance of authenticity. These are all very, very, very strong beliefs in our culture. But there's no stronger basis for such belief than in what Christians teach. And I'm just going to share it with you very briefly because it connects with how it is that something that happens to one man, something that happened to one man 2,000 years ago can actually have some type of an effect on you and me today. You see, you know, if you look at nature, by nature we're not equal.

And as you know, as abortion and all has taught many people in our culture, I think not correctly, that in fact, just because you are human doesn't even mean you're a person.

[16:02] And the greatest defense of human autonomy is the biblical idea that we aren't just a result of accidental changes throughout evolutionary history, but that we were created by the triune God, the triune God who is love, that he created us and made every single human being in his image, that every single human being, equally the rich and equally the poor, equally the gay and equally the straight, equally man and equally woman, equally the well-educated and the strong and the powerful and those who are the most weak, that every human being is made in the image of God. And that's, in fact, the most profound defense of human rights and human autonomy. There is no greater defense in any other system of thought or religion than that, but it has a particular bearing on this.

You see, we all know that, I mean, I'm separate from you. You've seen Amy come and you've seen Daniel come and you've seen Jonathan come and we're all very, very separate. So how is it that something that, let's say, Daniel does could have a profound impact upon me, just as if it's his own private a victory? Well, if in fact, every human being is made in the image of God, then what if that image that we're made in the image of, like we bear the image of God, but what if the very image itself, the very image himself in whose image we bear, and whose image we are made, if the unmade image, the original image, if he himself goes through something and achieves something? And it makes complete and utter sense that every single human being who bears that image, that what happens to the original can have a bearing with every single one of us who bears the image. And in fact, if you think about it even more, you understand how if that original image, the unmade, uncreated image that we bear, if that uncreated image takes on flesh, accomplishes something and desires union with us. It is a union which on one hand is both vastly strange and foreign, but at the other hand is vastly right and fits. That I, a mere mortal, ordinary human being who bears the image of God would come into union with the one whose image I am made.

That fits at the deepest, deepest, deepest level. And so you see, that is what Christians are proclaiming, that the triune God made us, that we are each made in the image of God, and that Jesus is that image made flesh. The original, uncreated image takes into himself our human nature and lives as a human being. And so it is possible that he could live a life that I could not live, and that he could die a death that I could not survive, and that he could bear the shame that I could not bear, and he could bear the punishment and the penalty that I could not bear, and he could defeat sin and alienation from God that I could not defeat, and he could be resurrected, something that I could not do so that death would no longer hold him. And he could offer to ordinary people like you and me that he could enter into a union with you that even death cannot break, that even death cannot break, nor can any loss, nor can any failure, nor can any shame break that union that he offers to you, that you can only receive by humbly asking him and trusting him. You can't say, well, listen, I'm really smart, or I'm so lovely, or I'm so beautiful, or I'm so powerful, or I'm so accomplished, you must take me. No, no. All it can be is by, in a sense, simply just saying, Lord, take me. I trust you, I can accomplish nothing, I'm not worthy of this. And that's what the Christian message is. It's all done for love, you see. He came and did this, he lived the life that we could not live, and died this death and rose from the dead, all for love.

Jesus tells us himself, he says in John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son to the end that all who trust in him will never perish, but have eternal life. And this trusting of him is this union with him. And if you think about it even more, this idea, this news of union is something which makes a very, very deep and human sense. Because just think of what love is like, and think about what friendship is like. That when you start to open your life, your heart to somebody, because you think you're falling in love with them, or you open your heart and your mind because you think you're becoming friends with this person, and you open up some of who you are, and you reveal a little bit, maybe more and more and more about who you are to this other person, hoping that they will respond with friendship or affection, or maybe even in some cases, with a deep love, that might even be a love that will go until death brings you to part. And you open up yourself. And not only do you open up yourself, if you just open yourself up, but the other person doesn't open themselves up, then nothing happens. But if the other person opens themselves in affection, opens themselves in friendship, opens themselves in love, as you open yourself, you start to have in a sense this type of union with that other person. And you know that something like that union has happened, a union that is right, when there's loss, when the friendship is betrayed, when your friend dies, when the love is rejected or mocked, and you feel as if something is torn deep within you, you feel as if something is violated deep within you, you feel as if there is now a hole where

there used to be no hole. And so even if on a human level, we understand that one human to another, there can be a type of a union that is real, how much more can that be with the God who created you and me? How much more can there be with the those of us, every single one of us made in the image of God, bearing the image of God with the image in who we are made, that union can be so deep when the image himself enters into union with ordinary people like you and me.

[22 : 59] And given that this image itself is God and has lived the life that we cannot live and died the death that we cannot die and triumphed over death, now even death cannot break that union, nor can any other lesser loss or diminishment. That is the Christian hope. That is why I say good news by trust in him, the Lord Jesus Christ will enter into a union with you that even death cannot break. It's news.

Okay, George, that was very impassioned. You almost had me for a moment. But I've been I remember what you said. And George, it's hokey. Okay. It goes on to talk like that. You know, maybe if it just stopped there, you know, I could buy it. But George, what Christians are going to sprout little wings, and then float up into the clouds. They're all of a sudden going to be like hot air balloons and float up into the clouds. I mean, these people were so primitive, like who'd want to be in a cloud, clouds are wet and damp and cold, and you wouldn't be able to breathe like the whole thing's just hokey. It's a picture language that doesn't make any sense.

Well, when you say it has no regard for the law of physics, that's those are, you know, those are really good points. So let's walk towards it. Let's just continue to see what it is that the Bible says and why it is that it might say it. It's verses 15 to 17. Some of you might not have remembered that part about being up in the clouds. So here's how it goes. 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. 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. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be brought up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be always with the Lord. So here's the thing.

Rather than being embarrassed by this, and obviously it can, we can make fun of it. And the idea of wings are all becoming like, you know, I don't know, like in a cartoon. And I take some helium and it makes me all big. And then I bob up into the sky until I bob around the stars. Here's the thing in the clouds.

Obviously that's ridiculous, but that's not what the text is saying. The fact the text is actually saying something that makes, in fact, very, very deep sense and actually fits with our deepest longing and yearnings in an even more profound way than what I've shared with you already.

[25 : 50] I'll just give you the point and then we'll unpack it. Good news, in union with Christ, you will be resurrected body and soul. Now think about this. Just think about your experience for a moment.

Nothing, that death just feels wrong. Your own death just feels wrong. That there's just something not right with it. Even though it's very, very natural. There's something profoundly unnatural about your death. And there's something profoundly wrong with the idea that there's just nothingness forever. And even when most people think about that, they don't really think about nothingness forever. What they think about is somehow that they're in nothingness, but they still exist. We don't think that literally we just stop. Everything is over and we no longer exist. There's just nothing. And that feels profoundly wrong. And we also have a profound sense that there's something wrong about the fact that our bodies fail. Now, for some of you who are young and healthy, you haven't had this experience yet because, I don't know, you've just been going to the gym and, well, I guess you can't be doing that right now. But back when you were, maybe you're home, Jim, and, you know, every week you, you know, you're stronger and you're better looking. But the fact of the matter is, is that even young people, their bodies start to fail. I've done funerals of teenagers and of children. And there just seems to be something wrong, unnatural, not right about the diminishment of the body, about the fact that it becomes frail and that it fails. And, and that's, there's another longing and yearning that we have that just doesn't also feel right. And that's, that's just the fact that we have this longing or yearning that somehow or another, we wouldn't betray ourselves. That, that we wish that our soul, our soul, our mind, our emotions, that there would be a consistency and a coherency in them. We, we will, we, we, we love a person. We want to really be good friends with them. And then we say the most stupid, dumb thing that hurts them. And we go

away and we go like that. And we think, I want to be friends with them. Or I want them to love me. Like, why did I say that thing? Like, why did I do that thing? That we have this sense that our souls, who we are, that it lets us down. And we think that shouldn't just be, we, we wish that there could be a day when our souls wouldn't let us down. And, and there's, that our bodies, not only do our bodies let us down, but our bodies sometimes are barriers from being able to express what we want to express. We hear of a, maybe at times like this, we hear of a, of a, of a loved one going through profound trouble because of this physical isolation. And we long to be able to go and give them a hug or just be in their presence or hold their hand or put our arm around them. And we long to be able to do that. But, you know, body, the distance and, and other things, it just gets in the way. And we have this profound sense that surely that there should be some way around that type of thing. But there's a type of problem. [29 : 20] We have these longings and these yearnings. And how do we think about them? In much of Eastern religion, the end of all things is nothingness, whether it's taken in Buddhism, that it's, there's nothingness, or whether in another type of version of it, where, uh, like in, in a very, very powerful Hindu imagery, I'm like a drop of water. And at the end of all things, after the cycles of reincarnation are all over, um, and I finally attained the state that I should attain, I, I am like a drop of water entering into the ocean, becoming one with the ocean. But that means I, as a drop of water, no longer exist. It, these are dreams of nothingness. But who dreams of nothingness? The depressed. When I have been depressed, there have been times, and I have been very greatly depressed at different times. And I feel like I wish I could just go to sleep and not wake up, not have to deal with tomorrow. But does that fit with all those longings and those yearnings?

And, and what about, in fact, how the, how it's thought about primarily in the West? Either you live some type of experience, some type of vague, wispy type of existence, or whether, uh, you just think you are going to live on in the memories of people. But that's, in fact, very, very cold hope to you. The fact of the matter is, is that most of us couldn't even name our great aunt, who's been dead for quite a few years. Our memories completely and utterly fade. And there's many, many people, uh, if you're to be a serious intellectual in the West, uh, you, you mock those types of hopes. Because the fact of the matter is, is that we came from nothing. The universe was completely and utterly indifferent about you coming into existence. And the universe is completely and utterly indifferent about your continued existence, and is completely and utterly indifferent about your death. And death is nothingness. Only the gospel explains your longings and yearnings with this profound good news that in union with Christ, you will be resurrected, body and soul. You see, what's being described here is the end of all things. It is Jesus is descending to begin to take this world, which is broken by sin and death, a sin and an evil, which comes from human beings, and has tarnished the earth and broken the earth and broken the cosmos. And we see here in Jesus, the one who in the year 30, the spring of 30 or 33, just outside of Jerusalem, died by crucifixion with the Romans. And then on Sunday was alive and having defeated sin and death. And there's this promise that he will come to not to bring with him, not just those who are in him, but to make all things new, a new heaven and a new worth. We see the one who defeated death. And there is in a sense, a crack in the fallenness of the entire world. The gun in the death and resurrection of Jesus, that when Jesus comes a second time, will bring all things into the way that they should have been with a new heaven and a new earth. You know, there's a very, very powerful story of just, and you might have noticed it when Daniel was reading it a bit earlier. And it's the story of the disciples on the day that Jesus rose from the dead, being in a locked room with the doors closed, the doors and the windows shut. And Jesus appears in the locked room. And we, if you think about it, we tend to think of it in terms of something like Scotty beaming you down, where you become more and more immaterial until you're the immaterial you can sort of find yourself in that room, whereas if you become sort of like a type of a mist that can go through things. But I think in the biblical account is that Jesus resurrected is pointing to a completely new relationship of resurrected bodies to the entire rest of the physical world that we are in home in. What we see in this is the beginning of what our resurrected bodies will look like, that Jesus is so real and so alive that the walls, in a sense, are like nothing to him. And whether it's just by having them part or whatever, is that there's a completely and utterly different relationship of the resurrected body to how the matter of the world works. And our bodies are no longer barriers to, our bodies are no longer barriers to the desire of a soul which is completely and utterly consumed and filled with love. It's the same as the story of Jesus walking on the water. All of the other miracles of Jesus are what

some theologians call the miracles of the old creation, things that normally happen in nature, but Jesus just shows his control over them. But there's the transfiguration, there's him walking on the water where you get this picture, this image of what it will be like in the new heaven and the new earth. When our souls are at one and our souls are at one with our body and our bodies are responsive to our soul and the body is no longer a barrier to ministry, I mean to love or compassion or truth.

And there's a completely and utterly different relationship with what we call the natural world, a different type of at-homeness. And we can believe it because of the resurrection of Jesus.

You see, in Christ, the same you, the same you is brought into union with Jesus.

[34 : 58] The same you is brought into a union with Jesus. And that union, even death will not defeat. And you too will begin that very first, you see that the pictures of Jesus descending to make all things new and I, if it happens when I'm still alive, all of a sudden my body, I become the resurrected George with a new relationship to everything.

A body which is a vehicle for love and for truth and compassion. It relates with the created world in a way that our deepest longings and yearnings know is right.

Let me ask you a question just as we draw this to an end. As to how this really, really, really matters. What would it be like if you, if somebody from the future, let's say you're about to, once the COVID-19 gets all out of the way and you were going to enter into some type of a business relationship or business venture, and somebody from the future said, by the way, do you know that in a year you're going to, you're going to work, you're going to work at 90 hours a week.

You're going to invest everything you have. You're going to pour out your heart and all your creativity to this. And you know what, a year from now, one of your co-workers is going to rob everything from you and you'll be left with nothing.

You've wasted your time. What would you do? You'd say, well, why? Why bother? If that's the end, then all this sacrifice makes no sense. But what if a person from the future said, I want you to know that if you embark on this venture, there's going to be hours and hours of work and you're going to be sleepless.

[36 : 40] You're going to be sick with worry. But you know what? In three years' time, it's going to be a spectacular success. Not only will you earn a very, very substantial income, but what you do will be a profound blessing, employing many and making a great difference in the lives for many other people.

If you knew that was the end, then it changes the entire story, doesn't it? If you watch the movie The Sixth Sense, and I won't give you a spoiler, the ending changes everything in the entire movie.

And if you were to watch a movie, and you watch a movie, and these are movies that critics often like, but it all ends with the bad guys winning, and all of the people who, in a sense, were the heroes, and all of the innocent people dying a horrible death, maybe the critics like it.

It might sell \$5 million in box office, but none of you will like a movie that ends like that. But you know what? Each and every one of us live in denial of our death, because the fact of the matter is, is that the very last thing, all of Bill Gates' billions become nothing to him.

See, here's the final good news. Look at verse 18. Remember, he says, therefore, encourage one another with these words. Encourage one another because, in fact, Jesus did die on a Friday, and was resurrected on a Saturday.

[37 : 52] The news that if you trust in him, Jesus will enter into a union with you that even death cannot break. Good news, in union with Christ, you will be resurrected, body and soul.

The longings and the yearnings that we know are most true. But good news, if the end of your story changes, the whole story of your life changes.

In Christ, the end of your story, ordinary people like you and me, the end of your story becomes not death and the loss of all things, not nothingness, not you were such a fool to sacrifice all those things.

No. The end of your story becomes the father smiling and welcome at you and calling you his redeemed child in a resurrected body.

If the end of your story changes, the whole story of your life changes. In Christ, the end of your story, in union with him, becomes the father smiling at you, welcoming you in your resurrected body into a resurrected world as his redeemed child.

[39 : 01] Even your past changes. Even your past changes. Even the worst things of your past become things that God can end up using when the end of your story is different.

Even the hard times you're going through now can be something that God can use for your good and for the good of others. You see, this isn't just optimism.

I'm not Pixar or Disney. I'm not talking about being optimistic. This is completely and utterly tied to the real defeat of death by Jesus and his real offer of union to him.

I'm not telling you about optimism. I'm telling you about Jesus. And you see, when you understand the end of your story is going to be such a thing, what does that do?

It ends up being the fuel for love. It ends up being the fuel for compassion. It is the fuel for justice. It is the fuel to bear with suffering. It is the fuel to pray for others.

[40 : 06] It is the fuel to know that this slight momentary affliction is preparing me for an eternal weight of glory beyond my imagination, which is something that Paul said in Corinthians.

When you know what the end of your story is, it is fuel to pursue justice, to sacrifice for compassion, to sacrifice for love, to bear promises even to your hurt, to make promises for the good of others, all knowing the end of your story.

There is nothing more practical for how you face life. If you haven't given your life to Jesus, I encourage you to do so.

If you want some help, contact the church. For Christians, remember Jesus. Remember the end of your story. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, we ask that you would grip us with the gospel at a very, very deep level, at a deeper and deeper and deeper level.

Father, we have things which we are grieving right now, maybe the loss of jobs or the problems of isolation. And you know our grieving, Father, but thank you that we don't have to grieve without hope, but that we can grieve with hope.

[41 : 21] So grip us with the gospel so that we can deal with these diminishments and these grievings in a way which is both good for us and will be good for others and bring you glory.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.