

PM 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

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Date: 10 December 2023

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[0 : 0 0] At the end of chapter 4 and into chapter 5, so we're going to read from chapter 4 and verse 13 up to chapter 5 and verse 11.

And this passage has to do with the second coming of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and verse 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.

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

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.

[1 : 1 6] 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.

Now, concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

While people are saying, there is peace and security. Then sudden destruction will come upon them.

[2 : 2 8] As labor pains come upon a pregnant woman and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then, let us not sleep as others do.

But let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night. And those who get drunk, are drunk at night.

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love. And for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[4 : 0 3] I am not sure if I gave out the page number when we did the reading. I should have done. It is on page 1189 of the Pew Bible.

We have been reading through Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. The first of the two letters that he wrote to this church over the past number of months.

As I have come and gone from the church. And we come to this portion. And you may remember, if you were with us, that in chapter 5 and verse 14, it appears that three groups of people within the church are mentioned.

Chapter 5 verse 14 says, And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all.

And as we've turned to the practical application of Paul's letter, which we really turned to in chapter 4, we see that he deals with, in chapter 4 verses 1 to 8, what we might call, based on chapter 5 verse 14, between the weak, those who were struggling in their weakness with temptation.

[5 : 31] And particularly with the temptation, which was all pervasive in the ancient world, of sexual immorality. And so he gives instruction in this passage about how a Christian should live in such an environment.

So he's seeking to strengthen, to help the weak in this particular area. And then this morning we looked at chapter 4 and verses 9 to 12, in which Paul gives teaching about the obligations that rest upon a Christian to work with their own hands, to provide for their own needs, but also to provide for those around them, who may not have the resources they need to live life.

So to provide food, to provide clothes, to provide the necessities of life. So you work hard, you aspire to live a quiet life, you mind your own affairs, and you work with your hands in order to not only supply your own need, and not to be dependent on others, but to have a little left over so that when need arises, you can be the one that God uses to supply the need of those people.

This will bring commendation to the church, and will bring glory to God, while the reverse of being idle, will only bring the gospel, and the name of God, and the church, into disrepute.

So you see that he says there in verse 12, you know, if you give up your idleness, and aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your own hands, as we instructed you then, you may walk properly before outsiders, and be dependent on no one.

[7 : 45] So the help, sorry, the weak have been helped, the idle have been admonished, and now, in the rest of chapter 4, in the beginning of chapter 5, he addresses the faint-hearted in the church.

There were those who were troubled in the church, and their trouble arose from confusion, and especially confusion with regard to the future, to those who had passed away, before the expected return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And their relatives, still alive, were troubled in heart, about their deceased Christian relatives.

And this is the subject that Paul addresses, in this section, chapter 4, verse 13, right through to the end of chapter 11, verse 11 and chapter 5.

And, he wants to teach them, and inform them more clearly, about the Lord's return, in order to encourage them, and help them.

[9 : 16] Now, it's good to remember, that the Apostles' letter, did not originally have, chapter divisions. These, and the verse numbers, were added many, many centuries later, long after the canon of Scripture, was closed.

And therefore, needless to say, the chapter divisions, in our Bibles, are not divinely inspired, or infallibly put in place.

Our reading, this evening, the passage before us, that stretches over two chapters, is basically, one single unit, that deals with questions, and matters surrounding, the Lord's return.

Now, we could ask ourselves, why did the Apostle, give this teaching, to the Thessalonians? And as I mentioned already, there was clearly, confusion, in the thinking, of the Thessalonians, particularly, with regard, to the Lord's return, and how it affected those, whom Paul, talks about here, as being, asleep, which, here, refers to those, who had died, in faith, who believed, and who trusted, in the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, their bodies, had been led to rest, in the local cemetery, but their spirits, at death, had gone immediately, into the presence of God, to await, the resurrection, of the body, on the day, of Christ's return.

Now we don't know, exactly, or precisely, the nature, of the Thessalonians, confusion. But what we can say, is that they were, clearly in need, of further, instruction, and, encouragement.

[11 : 10] We can say that, for sure, because if you look, at verse 13, of chapter 4, Paul says, we do not want you, to be uninformed, brothers. So they were, to a certain degree, uninformed.

And Paul didn't want, that state of affairs, to continue. So he's going to, give them teaching, to solve this, problem. And then again, in verse 18, of chapter 4, having given them, the instruction, he then says, to the church, therefore, encourage one another, with these words.

So clearly, there was a state, of discouragement. How often, we can be discouraged, because, we don't think straight. We haven't got, the teaching, of the word of God, clear, in our minds.

There's confusion there. And confusion, or, being uninformed, failing to grasp, the clear teachings, of scripture, that can often, lead to discouragement.

This is why, it's so important, to come to church, to sit under, the sound, of, the word of God, as it's opened, and, declared, week by week by week.

[12 : 25] God is teaching you, week by week by week, as we sit under his word. And, this should, help us, think, clearly, about, a wide range, of subjects, that will, drive away, discouragement, and faint heartedness, from us.

And, will make us strong, and, encouraged, to live, as Christians, in the world, for God's glory. And, again, in chapter 5, in verse 11, at the end of this, further section, of teaching, he says, therefore, encourage one another, and build one another up, just as you are doing.

But, do it, more, and more. So then, what does, the apostle, teach us, about, the Lord's, second coming? Well, let's set out, as we read the passage through, let us set out, as clearly as we can, the main points, that he mentions, in this passage.

Point number one, is that the Lord's return, is certain. We're not dealing, with possibilities here.

Maybes. We're dealing, with certainties. Why do I say that? Look at verse 15, of chapter 4. For this, we declare to you, by a word, from, the Lord.

[14 : 03] For this, we declare to you, by a word, from, the Lord.

So the first thing, we need to understand, is that, Paul's, teaching here, is not, the teaching of Paul, per se. But, it is, a revelation, from the Lord.

It is, a word, that comes, from God, not, from man. This, teaching of the Lord's return, is not, of man's, origin.

Rather, in the plainest terms, we can say, God, himself, has declared, what will take place. Paul, is only a channel, through which, God is speaking.

This, we declare, to you, by a word, from, the Lord. And what God says, will take place, will, take place, without, any shadow of a doubt.

[15 : 23] Now, when I was a young, Christian, in my teenage years, we were encouraged, to learn Bible verses, and one of the Bible verses, we learned, was Numbers, chapter 23, in verse 19.

It was in the authorized version, but this is what it says, in the English Standard Version. God, is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind.

Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not, fulfill it? And the answer, to both of those questions, is, no.

He will, do what he has said. He will fulfill, what he has promised. And you notice, what Paul says here, in chapter 4, verse 14, he speaks about, since we believe.

Why do we believe, what we believe? It is because, we have a word, from the Lord.

[16 : 37] So our belief, is not wishful thinking. It's not pie in the sky, when you die. This, is, a revelation, from the living God.

He has spoken to us, he has revealed, a mystery to us. A mystery, that we would never, have been able to, grasp, or discover, or understand, in our own strength, or wisdom, or insight.

But he has revealed, to us, that his son, is going to return, to this world. And that, is a fact, that is absolutely, certain, and sure.

What is our response, to that fact? Let me remind you, what we looked at, some weeks, or even months ago, now I can't remember. But 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 13, Paul is, reminding the Thessalonians, of his visit, to their city, and of how the gospel, was preached to them, and how they received, the gospel.

And in verse 13, of chapter 2, he says, and we also, thank God, constantly for this, that when you, received the word of God, which you heard, from us, you accepted it, not, as the word of men, but as, what it really is, the word of God, which is at work, in you, believers.

[18 : 15] Do we accept, this teaching, of chapter 4, concerning the return of Christ, Christ, as the word of God, as the word of God, it was revealed, and it was declared to them, by the apostle Paul, by a word, from the Lord, and it is certain, to take place.

Secondly, the Lord's return, will be personal. Look at chapter 4, and verse 16, where we read, for the Lord, himself, will descend, from heaven.

The Lord, himself, will descend, from heaven. The one, who is coming, is the same, Jesus, who went, into heaven, from the Mount, of Olives, before the eyes, of the men, of Galilee, as recorded, in the, beginning of the book, of the Acts of the Apostles.

You remember, what it says there? And when he had said, these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud, took him, out of their sight.

And while they were, gazing up, into heaven, as he went, behold, two men, stood by them, in white robes, and said, men of Galilee, why, do you stand, looking up, into heaven?

[19 : 49] This, Jesus, who was taken up, from you, into heaven, will come, in the same way, as you saw him, go, into heaven.

Or as in the words, of the authorised version, this, same, Jesus, shall, so come, in like manner, as you have seen him, go, into heaven.

This, same, Jesus, this, same person, the babe, of Bethlehem, the boy, among the teachers, of the law, in the temple, the carpenter's, son, of Nazareth, the son, of man, the one, who surpassed, John the Baptist, who confessed, that he was not worthy, to stoop down, and to untie, his sandals, the one, the same one, before whom, Thomas, fell, and confessed, my Lord, and my God, after the resurrection.

This, same, Jesus, will come again, as you have seen him, go. It's the same, person, the very same one, whose body, still bears, the marks, of his suffering.

His hands, show the nail prints, and his side, the scar, of the spear thrust. It is the same, Jesus.

[21 : 27] He's coming, and it's going to be personal. Third point, we're taught, in this passage, is that his descent, from heaven, will be public.

Not secret, not private, but public. According to this passage, he will be accompanied, by three audible sounds.

A cry, of command. The voice, of an archangel. And the sound, of the trumpet, of God. That's what we read, in verse 16, of chapter 4.

And if we, compare, what Paul teaches here, with what the Lord himself, taught, to his disciples, in Mark chapter 13, 26, and Luke, chapter 21, verse 27.

Their parallel passage, saying pretty much, the same thing. There we read, and then, they will see, the son of man, coming in the clouds, with great power, and glory.

[22 : 38] And you remember, when the risen Lord, appeared to John, the apostle, who was exiled, to the island of Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony, of Jesus Christ, Christ, and, gave him, this revelation, that we call, the book of Revelation.

You remember, in verse 7, of chapter 1, we read, behold, he is coming, with the clouds, and every eye, will see him.

So the coming of the Lord, is going to be public. There will be, the audible, cry of command, the archangel's voice, the trumpet sound of God.

Every ear, will hear, but also, according to Mark 13, Luke 21, Revelation 1, every eye, will see him.

Audible, visible, public. And then the fourth thing, we're taught here, is that the Lord, will not be, on his own, but will be, accompanied, by those, who have fallen, asleep.

[24 : 03] And it said, in chapter 4, in verse 14, God will bring, with him, those who have fallen asleep. And then we are told, also, that the dead, in Christ, and we believe, this is the same group of people, will rise first.

So, I believe, these two things, refer to, two aspects, of the one event. The spirits, of dead believers, that is, of those, who have fallen asleep, in Christ, will come, with Jesus, at his return, and will be, reunited, to their bodies, and will rise, out of their graves, on resurrection, morning.

He will bring, with him, those, who have fallen asleep, and the dead, in Christ, will rise, first. And then, the fifth thing, we're taught, is that the Lord, will then change, and transform, the living believers, by giving them, a resurrection body, which will mean, instantaneous, glorification, for them.

Listen again, to these glorious words. Chapter 4, verse 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.

Now, the words of Paul, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 51 to 53, throw some more light, on this aspect, of the Lord's return. Listen to what he says.

[25 : 53] Behold, he says, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised, imperishable, and we shall all be changed. For the perishable, must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body, must put on, immortality.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. What does that mean? Well, when the Lord comes, he will bring with him, those who have fallen asleep.

Which, as we, have already said, he's bringing, the spirits, of believers, who in the centuries, before, the Lord's return, died.

When they died, their spirits, went straight, into the presence of God. God, their bodies, were led to rest, at their funeral services, in the cemetery.

[27 : 09] Sleeping, as it were, until the day, of the resurrection. And when the day, of the return of Christ, the resurrection morning, comes, Jesus will bring, those glorified spirits, back with him.

Will reunite them, to their bodies, and their bodies, will be resurrected, just like, Jesus' body, was resurrected. But those, who are alive, at his coming, who are trusting in him, and looking forward, to his return, they will be, instantly changed.

And they will be, caught up, as it says, in our passage, along with these, resurrected saints. And together, we will be, with the Lord, forever.

So we will not all sleep, in the sense of, we will not all die. But we will all be changed. We will all be transformed. The perishable, will put on the imperishable.

And this mortal body, must put on, immortality. We will be, we are being prepared, for the presence of God, in the new heavens, and the new earth.

[28 : 33] Think also of, what the apostle Paul says, to the Philippian believers, in chapter 3, verses 20 to 21, of that epistle. He says, but our citizenship, but our citizenship, is in heaven.

And from it, we await a saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform, our lowly body, to be like his, glorious body, by the power, that enables him, even to subject, all things, to himself.

Isn't that great? What a prospect. We await, from heaven, where our citizenship belongs, a saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who when he comes, by his, great power, will transform, our lowly, bodies.

As we get older, don't we realise, how lowly, our bodies are. It's wrong to say, vile bodies, the, the authorised version, the older version, said that, but, there's nothing vile, really, about the body, that God made, and that God, is going to remake.

But it is in a, lowly, and humbled condition, because it's under a curse. But Jesus came, by the will of God, to reverse the curse, to take the curse away.

[30 : 16] And part of that, means, that our lowly bodies, are going to be transformed, and made, like his, glorious body, by his power.

And then the sixth thing, we're taught in this passage, is that the Lord, will bring together, and we've already mentioned this, but, I want to draw it out.

He's going to bring together, the resurrected, dead believers, I can't think of a better way, of describing it, but he's going to bring together, the resurrected, dead believers, believers, and the living, transformed believers, into a single, united, group, for the first time, ever.

The whole church, made up, of believers, in Jesus Christ, from all the nations, from the Jews, and from all the Gentile nations too, bringing them together, and what does it say?

So they will always, be, with the Lord, together, always, with, the Lord, verse 17, and chapter 4.

[31 : 43] United, together, in Christ, and with Christ, always, and forever. This is one of the encouragements, that Paul wanted to, minister to the, confused, and faint hearted, Thessalonian believers.

No one will lose out, your mother, your father, your granny, your granda, who trusted in Jesus Christ, but who have died, before his return, they will not lose out.

Every believer, will share, in the glory, in the benefits, in the experience, of the life-giving power, of God, in Jesus Christ.

We, shall, not, all, sleep, but, we, shall, all, without exception, be changed.

The perishable, will put on, the imperishable, the mortal, shall put on immortality. This, my friends, is the eternal life, that God, has promised us, and that will be, our portion.

[33 : 07] We, we are not saved, to be disembodied spirits. We are saved, to be resurrected, men and women, who will enjoy, and glorify God, in his new heavens, and new earth.

But moving quickly, onto the seventh point. The time, and season, and day, and hour, of the Lord's return, is unknown, but is nevertheless certain, unexpected, and inescapable.

And for this, we move into chapter five, verse one. Paul says, concerning the times, and seasons, brothers, no need to write anything to you. You yourselves, are fully aware.

I have instructed you, already, in this point. right at the beginning, of his ministry, he taught them, that no one knows, the day, or the hour.

It's unknown. It's unknown. But it's also, unexpected. Look at verse two, of chapter five. The day of the Lord, will come like a thief, in the night.

[34 : 25] It's unexpected. The thief, doesn't phone you up, ahead of time, and make an appointment, with you, and let the householder know, the day, and the hour, of, his break-in.

No, it's unexpected. He comes, unexpectedly, at night, when everyone in the house, is sleeping, and is completely, unaware, of the thief's coming. It's when people, are saying, peace, and, security.

Verse three, of chapter five. It's then, when they think, they are secure. That, is when, he comes.

When they have no inkling, or awareness, of what is about, to take place. Then, says scripture, sudden destruction, will come upon them. And, it is not only, unexpected, and unknown, but it is also, inescapable.

And, I think this is what, verse three, of chapter five, is driving at. Like labor pains, upon a pregnant woman, and they shall not escape. Now, there's been a few, pregnant women, in the congregation, and babies born recently.

[35 : 42] It's inescapable, isn't it? Once the pregnancy starts. A process has begun.

And, it will come to its end. It's inescapable. And, that brings us, to the eighth point.

And, I think this is, maybe the last point. You've been very patient, with me this evening. The Lord's return, ought not to take, the believer, by surprise.

Look at verse four, of chapter five. But you, are not, in darkness, brothers, for that day, to surprise you, like a thief. Now, let's try and follow, the apostles logic here.

Believers, he says, are in the light. they've got, they've got the knowledge. They're not, in the darkness, like the rest of mankind, who do not know God, who do not want, to know God.

[36 : 55] Believers, are children, of light. Children, of the day. Christians, are not, of the night. They're not, of the darkness.

Now, as children, of light, and children, of the day, Christians, have, certain obligations, resting upon them.

We, as Christians, are not, to think, or to act, as if, we were still, in the darkness, and in the night. We are, therefore, not, to sleep.

Now, Paul here, in chapter five, using sleep, is not referring, to death, but he's, referring, to a moral, sleep.

A spiritual, sleep. Not a physical, sleep. Not a, not to death. Moral, sleep, belongs, to the moral night, and to the moral, darkness.

[37 : 59] And this, moral sleep, is characterized, by, drunkenness. But the children, of light, he says, are to be, wide awake.

They're to be, sober. They're to be, self-controlled. They're to be, aware, of their surroundings. They're to be, aware, of what is happening, around them.

Look at what he says, in verse eight. But since we belong, to the day, let us be, sober, having put on, the breastplate, of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope, of salvation.

This is why, the day, of the Lord's return, is not to surprise us, as Christian, believing people. The Lord, has told us about it.

We are children of light, children of the day. we're awake. We're self-controlled. We're sober-minded, in that sense. We know what's coming.

[39 : 12] And we're living, in the light, of what is coming. And what wonderfully, encouraging words, of instruction, the apostle, ends this section, of his letter.

Verse nine, of chapter five. For God, has not destined us, for wrath, but to obtain salvation, through, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

And that applies, to us believers, who are alive, awake, to use Paul's, picture word here.

and to those believers, also, who have died, whose bodies, rest in their graves, but whose spirits, are before the throne, of God in heaven.

So whether we are, awake, or asleep, whether we're living now, or whether we die, our spirits, go to heaven, and our bodies, rest in the grave.

[40 : 13] The Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake, living, or asleep, dead, in heaven, or on earth, we might live, with him.

This is what God, has planned for us, as believing people. that we might live, with him. And even if death, should take us, it is that we might live, even closer, with him, in the glory.

While our bodies, rest in the graves. And then, when that day comes, he's going to bring, every, glorified spirit, dwelling with him, in heaven, with him.

Because his work, isn't finished, until those bodies, are resurrected, reunited, with their glorified spirits, and together, with the changed, and transformed, living believers, are gathered together, into one single church, to be, with the Lord, forever.

is it any wonder, he concludes, this passage, of teaching, on the Lord's return, with the words, therefore, encourage one another, and build one another up, just as you are doing.

[41 : 55] This is a word, of encouragement, encouragement, but only, for the believer. If you're not a believer, then this isn't, a word of encouragement, it's a word of warning.

But even that, can be turned, into a word of encouragement. If you heed, the warning, and turn, in repentance, and in faith, to this, Saviour, held out, to you, in the Gospel.

Which is good news. Because the business, of a Saviour, is to save. And Jesus Christ, saves to the uttermost, all those, who come unto God, by Him.

Whatever you are, whatever you've done, whatever sins, are in your past, His blood, is of sufficient, power, to cleanse, the foulest, stain, of sin.

In the Old Testament, God said, through His prophet, come now, and let us reason together. Though your sins, are like scarlet, they shall be, as white as wool.

[43 : 24] Though they be, red like crimson, they shall be, as snow. You know, one of the words, that's used there, to describe, sin, is, is really the word, double dyed.

It's, it's been dyed, not just once, but twice, so that the colour, is permanent, and fast, and cannot be, you'd sooner destroy, the garment, than change its colour.

But God is able, to cleanse, the sin, that cannot be, washed out, by any other means.

you would sooner, you would sooner destroy, the sinner, than remove his sin, from him. And yet, God is able, by the blood of Christ, to take that, double dyed, deep, red, crimson sin, and make it, as white as snow, white like wool.

why not come to him, and be cleansed, from your sin. For you won't be able, to escape, the day of the Lord's return, and its, impact, upon those, who are in the darkness.

[44 : 54] Sudden, destruction, will come upon them, like labour pains, upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

But this day, should not surprise you, brothers, for you are not, of the darkness, but of the light. Come into the light.

Flee from the wrath to come. Come into the light. And patiently wait, for your returning, saviour.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for, the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our only hope, in this dark world.

And we thank you for, shining the light, from your word, into our hearts, and into our minds. may we receive, and rest upon, Jesus Christ, alone for salvation, as he has offered to us, just now, in the gospel.

[46 : 06] Thank you for your word. Help us to believe it, with all our heart, and to know the peace, and joy, that comes, through trusting, in Jesus Christ.

in his name we pray, Amen.