

Maturing in the Faith Pt 3: A Prospective Walk

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 January 2026

Preacher: Raymond Smith

[0:00] Take your Bibles this morning, go over to 1 Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 this morning. As we begin looking and continuing in our look at a maturing faith. And part of a maturing faith is having the right perspective of what is to come.

Because as we look towards the future of what is to be, it helps us to live and to do what we ought to do now. And we've looked here in this chapter about what Paul would have for them to encourage those at Thessalonica.

And we know we talked about a pleasing walk that we should have with the Lord. To please the Lord in our walk. But also a practical walk where we're growing and maturing in the things of the Lord.

And so this morning we're going to look at a perspective walk. To walk in light of what is to come. In light of eternity. In light of our expectation. Because these young believers at Thessalonica had been faithful.

And they had stood in the midst of all their trials and their troubles. And their faith that was there. The change that followed was spoken about throughout Macedonia.

[1:12] And you know we know that Paul it tells us was encouraged by what he heard. But he knew they still needed to mature. You know no matter where we're at in life we've never arrived. You know one of the most dangerous things to do is to sit down and say I've arrived.

You know often times we don't sit down and say that but we act that. We think that we don't have to mature or don't have to develop in our life. And to have that right perspective helps us keep that in the focus that it ought to be.

Because we still need to mature to possess our own vessel in sanctification and honor. You know it was to be holiness not uncleanness.

That as a believer we're called we're supposed to be holy. Yet they still had questions about some things to get in line. Because we're going to look here this morning. They had a question about when Jesus comes.

You know that's a perspective thing. We're looking towards that. The return of the Lord. That's one of the key doctrines of the Bible. That Jesus is coming again. You cannot avoid that doctrine.

[2:20] I mean the reality is Jesus is coming again. He will one day return. Now what does that look like? You know that's an essential element of it too. To understand what it looks like for the Lord to return.

And the believers at Thessalonica had some questions. Some concerns. Because their concern was of the things Paul taught them about being ready for the Lord's return.

Their question had to do with what happens to those who aren't alive when it happens. And today we're going to look here at this prospective thing. Because even after we die we need to understand it's still a hope that we have.

It's a realization that's there. So if you found 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 this morning. Go ahead and take your stand together with me here this morning. We'll pick up here in verse 13.

And we find here notice what the apostle tells them. He says, For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord.

[3 : 42] That which are alive and remain under the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. With the voice of the archangel.

And with the trump of God and the dead of Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds. To meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words. Let's pray. Heavenly fathers we come before you this morning. Lord we just thank you for the reality that you are coming again.

Lord and what that means and the reality of even if we are not here. Lord that we've come gone to be with you before that happens. Lord that we're still. It's part of the hope that we have because of the resurrection.

The reality that's tied in. Lord we pray this would work upon hearts and lives today. That there be not one here today that doesn't know for sure where they would stand when this day comes.

[4 : 50] Lord because they need to know the reality of what it means when you come again. Lord and what it sets into play. Lord the reality of it. Lord help us to as believers just to trust you and to look for that coming.

The Old Testament is filled with prophecies of his coming, not only for the first, but for the second that have yet to be fulfilled. And we're going to see those things as we see it mentioned throughout Scripture.

The coming of the Lord is tied, though, directly to the resurrection. You know, oftentimes we forget. The coming of the Lord is tied to the resurrection. The hope, as we see here, Paul tells them, don't worry about those that are asleep.

Don't worry about those who have died, because the coming again is tied to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection is an important, essential understanding of the truth of the gospel.

[6 : 23] You know, Paul expounded this a little later on. You know, remember, 1 Thessalonians is one of the first letters written. And in 1 Corinthians, when he's writing to the church at Corinth, years later, he begins to expound on this same point, this same principle that we find there in chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians.

It tells us this in verse 19. It says, In this life only have we hope in Christ. We are of all men most miserable. He says, If there's no resurrection, life isn't worth it.

If there's no resurrection, what does life mean? But notice verse 20, he says, But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become, notice this, the firstfruits of them that slept.

Now, I want you to understand, what is he telling us here? He's telling us that Jesus, rising again, ought to comfort us and give us hope, because one day, if you're a believer, you're going to rise again and be changed, be transformed into his image.

There is a reality that we have. The fact that Christ is alive is the very fact that gives us hope. The resurrection of Jesus, you know, when somebody denies the resurrection of Jesus, they deny the very hope of the gospel.

[7 : 42] To deny the resurrection removes all hope. You know, 1 Corinthians 15, that's the theme of that chapter. You know, it starts out explaining the gospel, but the theme of the chapter, he says, the gospel doesn't make sense without the resurrection.

The resurrection is a key element that Christ not only died for your sin, but he had victory over that sin. That he had victory over the penalty of sin.

Victory over the death. Now, notice here what Paul tells them. I want you to see as we look at verse 13, because this is important. Notice what Paul says, But I would not have you to be what? Ignorant.

You know, one of the things I tell people, ignorance is a curable condition. Ignorance is curable. Now, some people are willfully ignorant.

You know, they think, if I don't know, it's not going to hurt me. You know, there are certain things, if you don't know, you will get hurt. You know, there are some things you need to know. In other words, it's dangerous.

[8 : 42] Ignorance is a condition that's curable, for it's simply this, it's a lack of knowledge. A lack of accurate knowledge.

Of understanding what God says. Verse 13 brings to light that we don't have to be in the dark about his coming. You know, there's a lot of people today who want to argue about Jesus coming again.

And there's a lot of people who want to argue about even the passage we're reading today, because it talks about us being caught up together with him. Oh, no, it's like, you can't skip this.

Paul says, don't be ignorant. Whether willfully or intentionally, don't be ignorant. Understand because it's important of how we view and have a proper perspective of what is to come.

Because have you ever noticed how you think about what's to come impacts what you do today? You know, how many of you get up on Monday to go to work because you just love to go see your boss?

[9 : 50] You know, the reality is you might like people you work with, you might like some other things, but you know what? Your perspective of going to work isn't to hang out with people. Your perspective of going to work is because you know that at the end, somebody's going to give you a paycheck, a reward for what took place.

Let's just face it, that is really our motivation. We need the money. That's the perspective. You work today because of the perspective of the future. You know, we live for Christ today because of what the prospect that he promises for the future.

That perspective future that he promises to us. And we're going to see here, this is one of the four times that Paul talks about truths that we need to know that we don't need to be ignorant. You know, it's interesting that Paul mentions many times and tells people, don't be ignorant.

You know, one of the things he tells is very important. This is one for today that's very important. Paul tells them in Romans chapter 11, he says, don't be ignorant about God's plan for Israel. You know, he tells them, don't be ignorant about it.

You know, he tells them in verse 25 there, he says, for I would not, brethren, that you be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles is come in.

[11:09] I want you to understand we don't have time to expound on that, but Paul said, don't be ignorant about Israel's place. There's a lot of people today that are ignorant of Israel. They don't have a right perspective.

Secondly, you find, he says, don't be ignorant about spiritual gifts. You know, 1 Corinthians chapter 12 in verse 1, he says, now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you to be ignorant.

You know, there's some things that you don't have to question. Paul says you want to know. You know, the third time he did this, he says, don't be ignorant about suffering and trials. You know, 2 Corinthians 1, 8, for I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came unto us in Asia.

You know what? Paul says, I don't want you to be ignorant of some things. And he says, particularly here, I don't want you to be ignorant of Christ's return. To understand in context, don't be ignorant about the rapture and the coming Savior.

You know, that's what we're looking at today. He says, don't be ignorant about what's going to happen. Because it's important to understand what's going to happen. You don't have to be ignorant about the Lord's return and the resurrection.

[12:22] You know, this is a concern being addressed. Notice back in our text, notice how Paul phrases this. And it tells us the context of why they're asking. It says, but would you have not you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep.

You know what? These believers had a genuine concern. Hey, if those that died before Christ returned, what's going on? Did they miss out on the promise? Did they miss out on those things?

They had a genuine concern. They had a concern about what was happening. It was a concern, not just curiosity. You know, one of the problems I find today when it comes to people studying what's to come, a lot of people study what is to come.

They study eschatology, that's that fancy term, with curiosity instead of concern. Because we ought to be concerned that others know. Because what's to come, they need to know.

The Bible tells us that you're going to die and face judgment. That's something people need to know. People need to be aware of what has happened.

[13:35] It's directly tied to the Lord's return. You know, the whole book of 1 Thessalonians, you find this theme throughout. Look over into chapter 1 for a moment. You know, you already got your Bibles there. Turn over to chapter 1.

And we find there, look down at verse 10. Chapter 1 and verse 10 there, it says this, at the end of this chapter, it says, and wait for His Son from heaven. What's He talking about?

Christ, what? Return. He tells Him who He raised from the dead, resurrection, tied to it, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

There's a purpose behind it. He's going to deliver us from God's wrath. That was the reason Jesus came. Look in chapter 2, look down at verse 19. We see this theme throughout.

It says, for what is our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? Think about that.

[14:31] What's He saying? He says, hey, Jesus is coming. Don't you want to be with Him when He comes? Be in His presence. Look over chapter 3. Chapter 3, verse 13.

Verse 13. To the end He may establish your hearts unblable in holiness before God, even our Father at what? The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

So I want you to understand when we're understanding chapter 4, you better understand chapters 1, 2, and 3 before it. The theme was there. He's building the reality of the connection between the saints of God and Jesus coming again.

I'll just throw this in here for your benefit. There's a phrase that people use when it comes to this passage. The rapture of the church.

I want you to understand the Bible never talks about the rapture of the church. It talks about the rapture of the saints. Terminology gets us in trouble because we might understand what it's saying but oftentimes people hear the wrong thing and tie it wrongly if they have wrong thinking.

[15:38] It doesn't say that the church is going to be raptured. He said the saints are going to be raptured. He's talking about all those that have called upon the name of the Lord. You say preacher you're arguing minor distinctions.

No I'm arguing something very important because it changes our perspective. I want you to understand that you don't have to be a member of a church to go to heaven. Now if you're ready for heaven you ought to be a member of a church.

That's two different things. One is obedience the other is preparedness. Both of which we have both practically in our walk as we practice the things that Jesus would have us do.

That's sanctification it's part of being obedient to the Lord. But notice here he uses another phrase in here that's important as we define some things here.

He says concerning them which are asleep. Which are asleep. This was a common expression that was used to express that someone had died.

[16:46] You know you say it's important because even in Paul's day this was an expression that was used. You know secular writers would write about life and death and what would happen.

You know you take a look here you find a one here that says hopes are among the living and the dead are without hope. Another one of his in the days of Paul wrote this suns may set and rise again but we when once our belief light goes down must sleep an endless night.

You know what even the secular writers use this terminology of sleep referring to death. You say why is that important because some people confuse this. There's a lot of confusion all over Lincoln about this.

I'm going to spend just a moment here because I think it's important because you're going to come into people who have some false doctrines about what this is talking about because when he's talking about sleeping it's important to understand what's he saying and how we reference that from scripture.

You know look back over to John 11 for a moment because if you're going to define something from scripture you need to go back and look at scripture. Jesus if you remember John 11 Jesus had been called because Lazarus had died.

[18:09] In John 11 in verse 11 you'll notice there that he says this Jesus says our friend Lazarus does what? Sleepeth. Which they were a little confused because Jesus is he just sleeping or what's going on here?

Now look down at verse 14. Jesus says I don't want you to be ignorant about what I said. Lazarus is what? Dead. So now we have a biblical definition and use of the term that Jesus used and Jesus defined it.

That's important. To say how is it used and how is it defined? Paul uses this idiom referring to death as sleep. It doesn't in any way support that idea of soul sleep.

There's a lot of people today right here in Lincoln that believe in soul sleep. The entire church has a big center right on the south side right in the middle of town over here. They believe that the present dead in Christ are in a state of suspended animation waiting for a resurrection to consciousness.

You know what? They miss a lot of things. Because Jesus clearly says sleep is dead. Now notice something because dead doesn't mean that you're separated from God because notice what Jesus look at Luke 22 Jesus is looking at that thief on the cross.

[19 : 25] What happened to the thief on the cross? He dead. Nobody questioned whether he died. Look what Jesus said unto him in verse 43.

Verily I say unto thee you're going to go sleep for a while before I see you again. Is that what Jesus said? Thou shalt be with me today in what?

Paradise. Jesus said if you're dead in Christ if you die in Christ you move to the presence of the Lord. Now your body is sleeping and resting.

Your body's corruptible. It's in the grave. But you are fully alive. I want you to understand your body is not who you are. The Bible makes it clear this body's going to go away.

Matter of fact the promise in 1 Corinthians 15 is that we're going to be changed we're going to put on incorruptible. This body's going to corrupt. It breaks down it falls apart and it finally dies.

[20 : 35] That's just the process it's corruptible. But our hope isn't in the corruptible our hope is in the incorruptible of the resurrection that Christ promises to those who follow him.

Look over to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 2 Corinthians chapter 5 you see here that Paul tells them here in verse 8 he says we are what? Confident I say and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

He says wherefore we labor that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him. In other words he says once you're in Christ it doesn't matter whether you're drawing breath here or you're in the presence of heaven you're secure in Christ.

What a promise. What a perspective to live by. What a focus that we have in that and we see here that Paul tells them here very clearly and he clears this up.

Notice what he says verse 14 back in our text in 1 Thessalonians for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

[21 : 44] You know even he tells the Thessalonians he says now if you were having soul sleep how did Jesus bring them with him? Jesus says I'm going to bring the saints that have died with me. Now this is an important picture to understand.

You know he will bring them because they're already there. They still have the hope of the resurrection of the body the corruptible that puts on incorruptible. You know 1 Corinthians 15 51 tells us this he says but behold I show you a mystery that we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed.

In other words he says there's going to be some that are alive and there's some that are going to go on before. But he said the outcome is going to be the same. There's no difference.

The outcome is the same. Notice what he says here in a moment in the twinkling of an eye. At the last trump for the trump shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.

You know what some of the saints being alive doesn't change anything regarding to those who have died. You know your promise in Christ is the same in this life as the next.

[23:01] The promise we have is real. Notice how Paul puts it here. Look down at verse 14 or verse 15 here. He says, For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord that we which are alive and remain under the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

You know? Paul uses the term we because you know why he uses we here? He says Paul's still alive. He says all those that are going to be alive are the we.

We that are alive and remain aren't going to hinder those who have already gone before. He ties that reality for us. It's the we. He includes himself but along with all believers alive at the coming the return of the Lord.

Will not prevent. That's not to hinder the Lord's promise of resurrection. When the Lord's return he will keep his promise to both those alive and to those who have died and we must understand that perspective that Christ will come again.

think about what Jesus told his disciples in John chapter 14. John 14 in verse 3 he says this and if I go and prepare a place for you I will what?

[24:14] Come again and do what? Receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also. He also taught them earlier John chapter 5 verse 25 he says verily verily I say unto you the hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God that they that hear shall live.

You know it's interesting a little later he displayed this at Lazarus grave. It tells us this in John 11 verse 43 it says he cried with a loud voice Lazarus come forth.

You know last time I checked there's a lot of similarities between a loud voice and a shout. We see that picture. So when it says that Christ will return with a shout notice what it tells us here in verse 16 for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with what a shout the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God.

Now there's a lot of people that speculate a lot of this but I think this really has to tie when you see the use of trumpets in the Old Testament one of them was to call assembly and to call forth. Numbers chapter 10 makes it clear that they made trumpets specifically for that task.

To assemble everybody get everybody packed up and say get ready to go. And then the trumpet sounds and everybody goes. This picture here is a military type picture of Christ coming and gathering his troops.

[25:45] The leader shouts gives the command then the archangel you say why is the archangel well the archangel is kind of like the platoon sergeant that turns around to everybody else and repeats the command and then the trumpet sounds the commander has spoken put it in action that's the picture we see here is when Christ shouts it's a command to move forward a command to come and he tells them this he says and the dead in Christ shall rise first in other words he says don't worry about those that are asleep because he said when Christ comes with his saints he's going to bring them who they are and their resurrected body now I want you to understand there's a lot of speculation about this but Paul calls it a mystery in other words we don't have all the details how God's going to do that there's a lot of things that God tells us we have no idea how he did it but we see the effects of it you know today when you breathe air you see the effects of what God did we have no idea how

God spoke creation into existence God doesn't give us a detailed plan as well I did this and this and this and this and that over there God just says I did you know when it comes to the resurrection he tells us I'm going to do this is going to be the result there's going to be the bodies that rise up and they're going to meet themselves and then we're all going to go up together now what that looks like I have no idea you can speculate all you want and we'll probably find out we were all wrong but I can tell you one thing it's going to happen that's the most important part doesn't matter how we want it to happen or what we think about it happening the fact is it's going to happen this is the truth this is the reality that we have that this is what we are and then notice he says first they're going to rise and then look verse 17 then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds we're going to be caught up together in other words somehow they're going to join the saints that died with the bodies that come forth and all of us that remain if we're alive at that time we're all going to go up back up together and meet the

Lord we're going to meet him in the air we're going to be caught up together now I'm going to take a little rabbit trail here for a moment because there's spot we need to clarify because you ever heard it seems to be more popular again today it runs in cycles there's a whole propaganda out there where there's no mention of rapture in the Bible have you heard anybody say something like that you know there's a lot of things we talk about that are not mentioned by that specific term in the Bible do you know that grandparents must not exist because grandparents not used in the Bible talks about your father's father but doesn't mention grandparents so therefore grandparents must not exist that's a similar argument that they're using they're saying if that particular word isn't in there but we all know that your father's father is what your grandfather that's how we refer to it today we don't call it well how's your father's father today you know my grandkids don't come over and say how's my father's father they just call me papa we have other theological terms like the trinity the concept of the three in one you never find the term trinity in the Bible but the principles behind it are clearly there it's laid out even though it's not called that in other words their argument is kind of mute to say something doesn't exist because it doesn't appear because let me give you a little clue the word rapture comes from a

Latin word from the same word that's translated from the Greek here caught up in other words it's just a different way of expressing the same term so in other words it's really kind of a mute argument that people make but it's important because sometimes people get oh yeah I don't see that in there it's like it's an irrelevant argument because what it's talking about is present no different than trinity or even grandfather it's not an argument that would make sense but we're going to be caught up you know the Bible tells us not to be deceived and understand the reality that we're going to be caught up to meet him in the air as the dead in Christ rise all those that are alive now I want you to understand all those that are alive in Christ what does it mean to be alive in Christ it means that you've called upon the Lord accepted what Christ has done for you called upon him as your Savior recognizing you're a sinner that's under judgment under the wrath of God and call upon him the one who took your place took the wrath you deserved and put it upon himself that there's a moment in time when you recognize that and said I'm going to call upon you I'm going to make reality to say

Lord I trust what you have done will cover and that you're going to pardon me because you've taken care of it that pardon that we have in Christ this is a mystery that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 15 I show you a mystery we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed the rapture we're going to be transformed this resurrection was mysterious because it was a promise to all those that believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you know look over to 1 John for a moment 1 John tells us something here very clear 1 John chapter 3 and verse 2 says this beloved now when John's talking to the beloved he's talking to those that have called upon the Lord said beloved now are we the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be for we know that when he shall what appear we shall be like him for sure we shall see him as he is and every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure you know what he says when you understand you're going to meet your savior face to face one day he says it changes the perspective in which you live this life it changes how you look at what's going to come

[32:13] I want you understand what's happening here he's not talking about the Lord coming as Lord and King his first coming came in two elements he came as a babe in the manger and it finished with a on the cross you know what his second coming has two phases the first is to take us out all those that have called upon him because he's going to set back a timetable that he declared back in the book of Daniel it's going to be reinstated that he foresaw and he prophesied what was going to happen the time that the Bible talks about is a time of Jacob's trouble now we don't have time to get into all that this morning but I want you to understand we're not talking about the time or the tribulation or when Christ comes to establish his kingdom this is when Christ says I'm going to remove everybody from the wrath that's about to happen if you read about the tribulation in the Old Testament and you read about the tribulation in the book of Revelation and you read about what

Jesus says about the tribulation time you ought to say I don't want to be there you know it's amazing you have other people who say we're going to prepare for the tribulation well I hope you know the problem is you're supposed to be prepared so you miss it if you prepare to participate you're in trouble there's a lot of people that try to prepare to participate you know what you got the wrong perspective you've got a wrong understanding because you ought to be prepared that you miss it because I tell you what it sounds a lot better being up there than it will be down here when you read the scripture trust me what's going on up in heaven is way better than what's going on down here it ought to make us excited about at the time of Jacob's trouble God's going to deal with Israel but the saints of this age will be with him forever the encouragement that perspective about his return will bring comfort to those that believe you know look how Paul concludes this passage look down at verse 18 notice what he tells us in verse 18 in our text what's he tell us does he say well if you think so or hope so he says no wherefore what comfort one another with these words

I tell you what there's nothing comfortable about going into the tribulation but there's a lot of comfort saying Jesus is going to come take us out of here before it really gets crazy there's comfort in having the right perspective of what's to come it's something that ought to comfort our hearts you know this morning does the idea of what we're talking about here comfort your heart are you encouraged because you know Christ is going to come take the saints out that we're going to be changed we're going to be conformed to his image this corruptible body is going to put on incorruption going to experience the reality of eternal life with him we're going to experience eternity with an eternal God it encourages me to realize that Paul's telling us to remind one another that this life with all its pains all its sorrows all its problems is just temporary he tells us to find our hope and comfort and our encouragement in the coming

Savior all this will pass you know this morning I want you to remember the Lord is coming does that comfort your heart or does that concern you because if you don't know the Lord is your Savior it ought to concern you because you're not prepared you know today we can be encouraged and comforted at the reality of his coming if you're prepared for it because it's coming whether you're prepared or not it's coming the day to be prepared is now to serve the Lord are you prepared or are you fearful when you think about his coming you know the Bible says it's a fearful thing to fall in the hands of God to face judgment where are you today do you find comfort or concern in what's to come his heads are bowed and eyes are closed this morning what about you today are you willing to say Lord

I'm going to get on board with what you want Lord I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that I know I've trusted you as Savior at that moment locks in no matter whether I live this life when I'm alive when you come or if I die I know I'll just go to be with you maybe you're here today and just need encouraged with the trials of this life realizing that they will pass that we have a far greater promise whatever the need might be what about you today heavenly fathers we just take a moment here to have an opportunity to respond to the truth of your word Lord we pray just have your hand upon each one Lord you know each heart each life here today you know exactly where each one is with you Lord I pray to you just stir hearts today to realize the importance of not only having the comfort but Lord also understanding the necessity of being prepared with you and Lord we ask all these things in your precious name as the piano plays what about you today maybe you need to spend some time with the Lord today is there something the

[37 : 45] Lord's speaking to you about need that you have a need that you have a need