



Living Right, Working Hard, and Waiting with Anticipation
for Jesus to Call Us Home!

1 Thessalonians 4:9-18

THE NECESSITY OF LIVING RIGHT AND PERFORMING THE DAY'S WORK WITH A "SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE."

(1 Thessalonians 4:9-12)

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 (NIV), "Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. ¹⁰ And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, ¹¹ and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹² so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody."

This passage begins with praise...but it ends in a warning.

With the warning, we can assume something; that the immediate situation behind the letter was a misunderstanding of the teaching and preaching on the Second Coming.

- The teaching/preaching of the Second Coming of Christ had produced an awkward situation in Thessalonica.
- Paul urged the Thessalonians to keep calm, to mind their own business and to go on working with their hands.
 - ✓ Many of the Thessalonians had given up their daily work and were standing about in excited groups, upsetting themselves and everybody else, while they waited for the Second Coming to arrive.
 - ✓ Ordinary life had been disrupted; the problem of making a living had been abandoned.

Paul's advice was practical, mature, and sound (biblically based).

He told them (my understanding of the Scripture):

The best way in which Jesus Christ could come for them was that he should find them quietly, efficiently and diligently doing their daily job.

- ✓ A Seminary Professor once said to his students, "Today I must lecture; tomorrow I must attend an all day committee meeting; on Sunday I must preach; some day I must die. Therefore, I must perform as well as I can in the everyday tasks that God gives us...looking forward to the day I will be called home."
- ✓ The thought that Christ will someday come, that life as we know it will end, is not a reason for stopping work; it is a reason for working all the harder and more faithfully.
- ✓ It is not useless waiting, but quiet and useful work toward our goals and objectives for the year, month, week, and day which will be the "born again" Christian's passport to the Kingdom.

Paul also told the Thessalonians:

- 1. "Whatever happens, they must show true Christianity to the outsider (the ones seeking truth) by the diligence and the beauty of their lives.**

- A. To go on as they were doing, to allow their so-called Christianity to turn them into useless citizens, was simply to bring Christianity into discredit.

Note: Paul has touched on a tremendous truth. A tree is known by its fruits; and a religion is known by the kind of men it produces. The only way to demonstrate that Christianity is the best of all faiths is to show that it produces the best of all men.

- 2. When we Christians show that our Christianity makes us better workmen, genuinely supportive of friends, kinder men and women, then we are really preaching.** In a way, "we are all called to preach."
- 3. The outside world may never attend church to hear a sermon...but it sees us every day outside church; and it is our lives which must be the sermons to win men for Christ.**

Paul continues to tell them:

- 1. You must aim at independence and never become "spongers" on charity.**

- ✓ The effect of the conduct of the Thessalonians was that others had to support them.
- ✓ It is the Christian's duty to help others, for many, through no fault of their own, cannot attain that independence; but it is also the Christian's duty to help himself.

2. There should be in the Christian:

- ✓ A lovely and charitable heart which delights to give and,
- ✓ A proud independence and a willingness to provide and supply his own needs (for himself and family).

*"One of the most important keys to Success is having the discipline to do what you know you should do, even when you don't feel like doing it." – **Unknown***

*"I am thankful for all of those who said NO to me. It's because of them I'm doing it myself." – **Albert Einstein***

*"Life is short, live it. Love is rare, grab it. Anger is bad, dump it. Fear is awful, face it. Memories are sweet, cherish it." – **Unknown***

CONCERNING THOSE WHO ARE ASLEEP

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, "We do not wish you to be ignorant, brothers, about those who are asleep, because we do not wish you to sorrow as the rest of people do because they have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also we can be sure that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For we tell you this, not by our own authority but by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who survive until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not take precedence over those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven, with a shout of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God; and the dead who are in Christ will rise first, and then we who are alive, who survive, will be caught up by the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall be always with the Lord. So then encourage one another with these words."

The idea of the Second Coming had brought other problems to the people of Thessalonica. *Note: There was a misunderstanding between the "rapture" and the 2nd Coming of Christ.*

- *They were expecting it very soon; they fully expected to be themselves alive when it came but they were worried about those Christians who had died.*
- *They could not be sure that those who had already died would share the glory of that day which was so soon to come.*

Paul's answer to the church:

- There will be one glory (body change; mortal bodies to immortal bodies) for those who have died and those who survive.
- They must not sorrow as those who have no hope.
 - ✓ In face of death the pagan world stood in despair. They met it with grim resignation and bleak hopelessness.
 - ✓ On their tombstones grim epitaphs were carved. "I was not; I became; I am not; I care not."

Paul lays down a great principle (which is three-fold):

1. The man who has lived and died in Christ is still in Christ even in death and will rise in Him.
2. Between Christ and the man who loves him there is a relationship which nothing can break, a relationship which overpasses death.
3. Because Christ died and rose again, so the man who is one with Christ will rise again.

The picture Paul draws of the day when Christ will come is poetry, an attempt to describe what is indescribable.

- At the Second Appearing (Rapture) Christ will descend from heaven to earth (in the air, not on earth).
- He will utter the word of command and thereupon the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God will awaken the dead, then the dead and the living alike will be caught up in the chariots of the clouds to meet Christ; and
- Thereafter they will forever be with their Lord.

It is understandable that we don't understand all the details of this glorious, wondrous, unimaginable scene Paul is speaking about...He didn't either. It was revealed to him...and we take it by faith that it will happen.

It is not the details which are important. What is important is that in life and in death the Christian is in Christ and that is a union which nothing can break.

❖ **We Will Be Changed By God** (1 Corinthians 15:51-54), *"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality.⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the*

mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Behold I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (v. 51)

"Mystery" describes something formerly hidden but later revealed. Some truths about Jesus' (the Messiah's) return were not revealed in the Old Testament but were made known through Jesus and His apostles in the New Testament.

Two (2) Truths:

- 1. At our Lord's return, believers' bodies will not "sleep" (experience physical death) but be instantly transformed.**

This spectacular moment will happen in "a moment in the twinkling of an eye" (v.52)

After Jesus returns to receive his bride (all born-again believers), only those who have not trusted in His gift of salvation will be left on earth.

They will be left here and go through a 7 year period of great tribulation that will be the time of God's wrath.

- 2. The deceased believers in Christ will be raised at Jesus' coming. This transformation will occur "at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible" (v. 52a).**

The curse of death will be reversed for them, and believers living at that time "shall be changed" as well (v. 52b).

All these people will receive new bodies that will not be subject to sickness, pain, or death.

Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah (25:8) at the end of verse 54;

"So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

What God desired in the Garden of Eden and what He graciously gave to Enoch and Elijah is what an entire generation of believers will one day experience—instant transfer to heaven.

At the same time, those believers who have died will experience complete victory over death.

Encourage others with these words!

The Dash

the poem by Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend. He referred to the dates on the tombstone from the beginning... to the end.

He noted that first came the date of birth and spoke of the following date with tears, but he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time they spent alive on earth and now only those who loved them know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own, the cars... the house... the cash. What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard; are there things you'd like to change? For you never know how much time is left that still can be rearranged.

To be less quick to anger and show appreciation more and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile... remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.

So when your eulogy is being read, with your life's actions to rehash, would you be proud of the things they say about how you lived your dash?

***George Washington's Epitaph above his grave (Scripture verse):
John 11:25-26, "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."***