

Bereavement, Judgement and the Nature of Faith

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- [0 : 0 0] Let's turn to God's Word and 1 Thessalonians. Edward is continuing his series in 1 Thessalonians and we're reading from chapter 4 and from verse 13.
- 1 Thessalonians and we're reading chapter 4 from verse 13. The Apostle Paul writes, 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.
- 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.
- [1 : 2 9] 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 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.
- [2 : 3 1] For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us. So that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with him.
- Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up just as you are doing. Amen.
- May God bless to us his words this evening. Well, good evening, friends.
- Let's turn together to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. And as you know, our passage runs from chapter 4, verse 13 to chapter 5, verse 11.
- And my title is Bereavement, Judgment and the Nature of Faith. Now, a big change takes place in chapter 4 between verse 12 and verse 13.
- [3 : 3 4] The first 12 verses of the chapter sees the Apostle Paul dealing with Christian behavior in this life. That is, our life on earth. He's been teaching the Christians at Thessalonica about sexual morality and about work.

We studied that last week, but perhaps I can just sum up the teaching of those first 12 verses in a few words. And it's this. God's will for our lives is our sanctification, as it's put in verse 3.

Our sanctification, our progress, our development in godly living. And this means, says Paul, that we must abstain from sexual immorality. Sex is for marriage, and marriage is for one man and one woman.

And sex in any other context is sexual immorality. Abstain from it, says Paul. And then work, verses 9 to 12. Paul teaches the Thessalonians and us to work away steadily at our jobs so that we can have money and means to support each other.

It's an important way of showing brotherly love to each other. So working is part of loving. But at verse 13, Paul changes gear rapidly.

[4 : 51] He stops talking about our life and ethics in this world, and he starts to talk about the world to come. This final paragraph of chapter 4 is about what happens to Christians when they die.

And the first paragraph of chapter 5 is about Christians being prepared for the return of the Lord Jesus. In fact, both of these paragraphs center on the return of the Lord Jesus, although they come at it from slightly different angles.

And then if you glance ahead to chapter 5, verse 12 and onwards, you'll see that we come back down to earth again with a bump. And Paul concludes his letter with more encouragements and instructions for living the Christian life in this world.

Isn't it lovely, then, that God gives us instructions both about life in this world and about life in the world to come and being prepared for it?

It means that Christians are being trained to be bifocal people. We have our eyes on everything which is going on around us. We have to. We're engaged with real life and real challenges in the present world.

[5 : 59] But we also have our eyes on the far horizon because we're waiting, eagerly waiting, in the words of chapter 1, verse 10, for God's Son to return from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

So God is equally concerned to teach us how to live now in the old world and to be prepared for the world to come. But there's a big difference between those two strands of teaching.

Our life in this world is about things that we can see, things that we experience. Sex, work, they're two of the most fundamental ingredients of human life.

In fact, human life would pretty quickly come to a full stop without them. But the return of Jesus and what happens afterwards, these are things which, by definition, we have not yet seen.

Or experienced. We have not seen Jesus returning. We have not yet been raised from our coffins in the necropolis. It's impossible for us to know about these things on the basis of our experience.

[7 : 10] So if we don't have the basis of experience, on what ground can we believe that Paul is telling us the truth in these paragraphs? Well, it's all to do with faith.

But we need to understand the Bible's teaching on what faith is and how we exercise it. Bible faith is not wishful thinking. When I was a young boy, there was a fish and chip shop in the small town where I grew up.

And it was called the Battered Mermaid. If, as a small boy, you stood outside this shop on a cold winter's evening like tonight, and there were people passing in and out of the door, every time the door opened, the smell that came out was absolutely wonderful.

There was a small sign that hung in the doorway which read, Don't just stand there hoping for the best. Come inside and get it. Now, is Christian faith just a matter of hoping for the best?

No, it is not. Our assurance of the reality of things that we don't yet see and experience is a thoroughly solid assurance. It's based on God's promises.

[8 : 20] And promises always concern an unseen future. In fact, the whole story of the Bible is the story of God's promise being stated and worked out and delivered upon.

It starts way back, Genesis chapter 3, in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve have just rebelled against God, and he is pronouncing his righteous judgment on them.

And his judgment on them is that their life from now on is going to be marked by struggle, hard toil, aging, and death. But in the midst of this severe judgment, God promises that one day a descendant of Adam and Eve will come who will crush the power of the serpent.

The wretched man and woman deceived by the serpent are banished by God from the garden. They're banished in disgrace and despair, but not total despair, because ringing in their ears is the promise that one day someone will come who will destroy their deceiver.

Then many centuries later, God summons Abraham and designates him the father of the Jewish nation. And God's commissioning of Abraham is all based on his promise.

[9 : 36] The Bible calls it a covenant, a solemn promise that Abraham will be the father of a great nation. His descendants will live in the promised land. And through this promised people of God, the people of Israel, eventually blessing will be given to all the nations, to all the Gentile peoples of the world.

And this promise to Abraham is fulfilled finally in the person of Jesus, who brings eternal salvation to people of every nation who turn to him in repentance and faith.

And this promise given to Abraham, repeated by God to his son Isaac, repeated again to his son Jacob, this promise is the golden thread that runs right the way through the Old Testament.

And every time you read in the Old Testament the phrase Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, you're meant to understand promise or covenant. Those names are not put there simply to remind us of the names of the patriarchs, as though we were in danger of forgetting them.

No, they mean promise. God's promise that will be fulfilled, that will be delivered upon. And so it was in the person of Jesus.

[10 : 52] As one of the old hymns puts it, Hark the glad sound, the Savior comes, the Savior promised long. Faith, then, is trusting that God will do as he has promised.

And he proved that he was faithful to his long-term Old Testament promises by sending Jesus. In other words, he has form as a promise keeper. But we now live in what the Bible calls the last days, the period between Jesus' first coming and his second coming.

And we still live by trusting Jesus' promises. What then has he promised? Well, first, eternal life to all who believe in him.

For example, John 3.16, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Secondly, Jesus has promised to return. He promises this many times in the Gospels. Here's one example from Mark 13. Then, he says, They will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.

[12 : 04] Thirdly, he has promised that when he returns, he will judge the world. For example, Matthew 25. When the Son of Man comes in his glory, he will sit on his glorious throne.

And before him will be gathered all the nations. He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. In other words, he's saying the day of judgment will be a separation of those who belong to him from those who don't belong to him.

And it will be an eternal separation. Now, in our passage for this evening, 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, Paul is basing his teaching on these promises from Jesus.

Now, a promise by nature is made about something in the future, something which has not yet happened. So, for example, your grandfather might say to you, I'm going to leave you a substantial sum of money when I die.

It's all there in my will. Now, if he's a man of integrity, you'll trust that promise. You might have to wait a little bit. He might be alive and well, but you'll still trust it.

[13 : 13] If, on the other hand, he's a blabbermouth and a rascal, you won't believe him. But if he's a trustworthy man, you will certainly believe him. His promise relates to the future.

Now, God is more than trustworthy. He is the origin of all trustworthiness and all integrity. He never lies. He cannot lie. And he has all power.

So if God or his son Jesus promises us something, we can rely absolutely that he will deliver on his promise. Faith is trusting that God will do everything that he has promised to do.

Faith is not hoping for the best. Faith is reliance on God's integrity. He has made promises and he will deliver on them. So Paul, knowing that God's promises are true and trustworthy, is building up the faith and the understanding of the Thessalonians in these two paragraphs.

And he's addressing here two anxieties which he knows they will be feeling. The first anxiety is about what happens to Christians at Thessalonica who have died.

[14 : 24] Where are they? Are they all right? Have they simply ceased to exist? And if not, are they happy? Then the second anxiety concerns the return of the Lord Jesus.

When is it going to happen? And how can we be prepared for it? Now let's notice before we dive into the text, the last verse in each paragraph.

First of all, have a look at chapter 4, verse 18. Therefore, encourage one another. And then chapter 5, verse 11. Therefore, encourage one another.

So do you see how his purpose in both of these paragraphs is absolutely plain? He's writing to Christians who are feeling a little bit faint-hearted, a little pili-wali. Christians who need encouragement.

And if that should be us, and it probably is, let us draw encouragement for ourselves from Paul's teaching. Because it's for us as well as for them. Well, we take it in two sections.

[15 : 30] First of all, from chapter 4, verses 13 to 18, Paul is teaching the absolute safety of those who have died as Christians. Now in verse 13, Paul shows his motivation for passing on this teaching.

In fact, there are two motivations in verse 13. First, we don't want you to be uninformed, brothers. And second, we don't want you to grieve like others, like pagan people who have no hope.

First then, we don't want you to be uninformed. Encouragement comes when ignorance is replaced by understanding. You see, Paul loves these Christians.

He's their teacher, and he wants to bring joy and peace to them by clearing away their ignorance. And secondly, he doesn't want them to grieve in the wrong way.

He's not saying to them, you mustn't grieve. Now, of course we grieve when those we love die, because we're separated from them. Death is ugly. Even Jesus wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus, despite the fact that he knew he was just about to raise him from the dead.

- [16 : 43] Tears at Christian funerals are natural and normal. We need to mourn. There's something in us that bursts out. We need it. But it's not like pagan grief.

Verse 13 describes pagan grief, unbelieving grief, as no hope grief. Christian grief is painful. It's a grief of sorrow and tears, but it's not no hope grief.

Why not? Well, Paul goes on to explain in verse 14. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

So Paul is saying there that God has established a pattern. Jesus died, but didn't stay dead. He rose again. And that's the pattern that all who belong to him will follow.

Now, do you see how Paul describes the Christian dead there? They are those who have fallen asleep. In fact, he uses that phrase three times in verse 13 and verse 14 and verse 15.

- [17 : 52] Jesus used that same phrase of his friend Lazarus. He said in John chapter 11, Lazarus has fallen asleep. And that phrase is making the point that this condition is temporary.

It's like sleep from which we wake up. The soul of the dying Christian goes straight to be with the Lord. Just as Jesus said to the thief who was crucified next to him, today you will be with me in paradise.

But the body will be raised later. The body is, as it were, asleep. Now, here's a curious and interesting piece of information. Our word cemetery comes from a Greek word which means dormitory, a place where people sleep.

So our word cemetery reflects exactly what Paul is teaching here. The bodies of the Christian dead are asleep in the cemetery and are waiting to be woken up.

Now, just picture this, friends. This might be helpful. Picture this in terms of my own demise. Okay, there I am. I'm 103 years old. I'm lying in bed and I'm just about to take my last breath.

- [19 : 06] Whew. There it is. I'm dead. I'm gone. What happens now? My soul, conscious and full of joy, is taken to be with the Lord.

I'm with him. But my body is now redundant. It's quite unnecessary. It's buried or cremated. But either way, it disintegrates. It has no future in its old world form.

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. But what happens next? We'll look on to verse 16.

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.

So when Christ returns, I will be bodily raised. Not that old, worn out, useless body. That's redundant.

- [20 : 06] But in a new body, a resurrection body like the body of Jesus after he was raised. A body completely strong and vigorous. No longer subject to pain and weariness.

And this new body will be reunited to my soul. And there I will be, physical in my new body, a joyful partaker of the resurrection.

Now what about other people, other Christians? Well, Paul is picturing the situation at the moment when Christ returns to the earth. The Thessalonians might well have been asking, are the Christians who have died before Jesus returns going to be at a disadvantage compared with those who are still alive when he comes back?

Are they going to be second class citizens of the kingdom of heaven? Paul says, no, not at all. Verse 15. 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.

And then look at the end of verse 16. The dead in Christ will rise first. Then, verse 17, we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

[21 : 26] And so we will always be with the Lord. Now the clouds throughout the Bible always represent the very presence of God. God guided the Israelites in the Old Testament through a cloud in the book of Exodus.

And when the tabernacle and later the temple were dedicated, God showed his presence and his approval by means of a cloud. When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, God spoke about him from a cloud.

This is my beloved son. Listen to him. So Paul is saying in these verses that there will be a wonderful gathering of God's people in God's presence when Jesus returns.

And notice two lovely details in verse 17. First of all, in the middle of the verse there. Together with them. The Christians who have already died will then be together with the Christians who are still alive at Christ's return.

So it will be a kind of huge reunion. It gives us every reason to believe that we shall not merely see again those Christians who have died and whom we haven't seen perhaps for a long time.

[22 : 37] We shall not only see them, we shall be with them. But secondly, look at the final phrase of verse 17. So we will always be with the Lord.

That means the Lord Jesus. So with one another and with him. As Paul puts it in Romans chapter 8. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So do bear this in mind. When someone you love, someone who's a Christian, dies, we need Paul's teaching to interpret to us the meaning of a Christian's death.

In the hospital or the care home or the mortuary, the dead body of a Christian looks exactly like the dead body of somebody who's not a Christian. One corpse looks just like another.

[23 : 45] If we only had the evidence of our eyes, we wouldn't know what to make of the death of a Christian. But Paul, taught by the Lord, opens up the real meaning of it all and enables us to understand the glorious future of all who die as believing Christians.

Therefore, friends, don't fear death if you're a Christian. Then look at verse 18. Therefore, he says, Encourage one another with these words.

These words, in other words, are for all of us to use to encourage each other. All of us. There's something thoroughly democratic about this. In our modern age of endless therapies and specialities, we might think, My friend's granny, who was a Christian, has died.

But what can I do to help my dear friend? I'm not trained in counseling. So surely she needs to go to a professional bereavement counselor. No, she doesn't.

All she needs is for you to go to her, take this passage with you, read it to her, talk about it together over a cup of tea. Paul has written these things to the whole church membership at Thessalonica.

[25 : 00] Deaths occur in every family at regular intervals. This passage is the counseling manual that God has put into the hands of all of us. So let's use it gently and lovingly with our friends when their loved ones who are Christians have died.

So there will be grief. There will be tears. But for those who die as believing Christians, we have it on the authority of Christ's apostle that their eternal safety is absolutely secure.

Well, let's turn now secondly to chapter 5, verses 1 to 11, where Paul's message is Christians must not be surprised by the return of the Lord Jesus.

And we'll notice three points here. First, the date of the Lord's return is unknown. And this is what underlies verse 1.

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brother, times and seasons, people have always been interested in trying to put a date on the Lord's return. But in Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus himself says that only God the Father knows the date.

[26 : 12] Even Jesus is not privy to that information. It's not on his kitchen calendar. Now during this last 2,000 years, various groups and cults have made confident predictions about the date of the Lord's return.

They have never been right. They've always ended up with egg on their faces looking foolish. It's best to take our cue from Jesus and not to try to speculate. But if the date of his return cannot be known, the certainty of his return is beyond doubt.

Look at verse 2. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come. So the timing is unknown, but the fact of it is certain.

Then secondly, the manner of his return will be sudden. Verse 2. Like a thief in the night. I don't know if you've ever been burgled in the night.

It's a pretty unpleasant experience. But it comes so suddenly. It comes so unexpectedly. The burglar doesn't politely send you a text a day or two beforehand saying, Next Tuesday at 3 a.m.

[27 : 26] I propose to drop in on you and relieve you of a few valuables. No, when he drops in, it's entirely unannounced. If you knew when he was coming, you would sit up and wait for him.

And you'd have a couple of large police officers with you if you're sensible. Paul enlarges on his theme in verse 3. He pictures people who don't know the Lord having a conversation together.

They're very happy about the situation. Peace and security. That's the subject of their conversation. Imagine them. Isn't it lovely, one of them says. Lovely to be here in Scotland.

It's such a peaceful country, isn't it? In fact, we've got it all here in Scotland. Everything. Bagpipes. Locks and glens. Whiskey from Glenlivet Up. A monster.

A monster up there to attract the American tourists and bring in extra money. We've got oil. We've got gas. We've got Harris Tweed. We've got the fishing. We've got the stalking. We're made. We're absolutely secure.

[28 : 26] Look at verse 3. While people are saying there is peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman and they will not escape.

The day of the Lord, his return, it's a dark and terrible day for those who are trusting this world to give them peace and security. It will be a day of sudden destruction.

That's the phrase Paul uses. When labor pains come upon a woman, there is no escape. It's happening. She can't say, I'm not ready for you, sunshine. I haven't decorated the bedroom yet.

Hold on. She can't do that. It's happening. Those who have turned their backs on the Lord Jesus will not be able to escape his destructive power when he returns. To the believer, he will be a savior.

But to the unbeliever, he will be a destroyer. If you're an unbeliever here this evening, don't turn a deaf ear to the apostles' words because these words are for you.

[29 : 29] Then thirdly, the return of Jesus will not surprise the Christians. Here is verse four.

But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. When the Lord returns, we who are Christians, we shall be overawed.

It will be a tremendous day, but we shan't be surprised. We know it's going to happen. We're waiting for it. And in verse five, Paul uses a striking picture to distinguish Christians from unbelievers.

He says in verse five, for you are all you Christians are children of light, children of the day. But here are those who are not believers. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

So Christians belong to the daylight where things can be clearly seen and clearly understood. The person who's not a Christian may understand many things about the life of this world.

[30 : 30] He may be an expert in his own field, but he's in the dark about God and about Jesus. His understanding is darkened about things that are most important.

And this is the great sadness about the non-Christian world. Understanding so many things, but not able to understand that there is an ultimate problem, which requires an ultimate solution that only God can give.

The problem is alienation from God through sin. And the solution is Jesus Christ, who alone is able to save men and women. But Paul goes on in verses six and seven to tell Christians how our position as children of light should make us behave.

And his message there is don't go to sleep. Stay awake and be watchful. Don't allow the world that we live in to seduce you and anesthetize you against reality.

He pictures the nightlife of the world in verse seven, where people say, let's get drunk. Let's forget everything. And it's surely more than physical drunkenness that Paul has in mind here.

[31 : 41] It's the whole attitude of the human heart that wants to avoid engaging with the most important questions. The questions about God and the real meaning of human life.

Picture, for example, a young man, not a Christian, but a young man at the age of 20. It could equally well be a young woman. But this young man is thoughtful and curious at that age.

He asks questions about life and reality. He's looking into science and literature. He asks questions about religion. He begins to read the Bible.

He has Christian friends. He talks to them. He comes to church a bit. But after a while. He stops asking questions about God. Why?

Because he begins to realize that Christianity is not just another field of study like mathematics or Shakespeare. It's about the whole of his life.

[32 : 40] He perceives rightly that to become a Christian, he's going to have to hand over the running of his life to the Lord Jesus. And he wants to retain the controls himself.

So he turns away and immerses himself in the life of the world. He anesthetizes himself against God. And by the time he's 50, he is so far away from God that only a miracle can turn him round.

He came near. But the cost of following Christ was more than he was willing to pay. So eventually he calls himself an atheist. But as the Psalms say, it's a fool who says in his heart, there is no God.

So Paul is calling us to leave all that darkness behind where our perceptions of reality are like the perceptions of a drunken man. Verse 8 is a very bracing verse.

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. Sobriety, faith, love and the hope of salvation.

[33 : 52] And you see how it's couched in terms of a soldier's armor. Paul develops his teaching about the soldier's armor much more fully in Ephesians chapter 6, which was written some years later.

But it's the same idea here. The Christian is like a soldier under attack. There we are on the battlefield. It doesn't look very much like a battlefield here this evening, does it?

With everybody sitting quietly and politely and looking forward to a cup of coffee. But even at this very moment, if you're a Christian, you're under attack. The enemy's chief weapon is lies and deceptions.

The enemy's great aim is to get us not to believe what the Bible is teaching. He's been like this from the beginning. Remember his first appearance in Genesis chapter 3.

He sidles up towards Eve and he attracts her attention. It's what snakes do, isn't it? And he says to her, you can't really trust what God has said, little lady.

[34 : 57] I can show you a much better way. Just look at that fruit there. It is mouth-watering. So it is, she says. So it is.

And down she goes. And there's Adam lacking all spine. And he goes down with her. The deception overcomes the truth of what God has said.

Now, friends, that's the danger that we're in every day. That's why we need to buckle on this armor every day. Not just on Sundays, every day. Verse 8.

The breastplate of faith and love. Faith that believes that God will do everything he's promised to do. And love. The love that helps us to care for each other.

And protect each other from falling to the devil's lies. And for a helmet, says Paul, the hope. The sure expectation of salvation. We need to be armed every day like this against the devil's attacks and lies.

[35 : 55] We are not spectators looking on at a battleground. We're on the field ourselves. It's a long battle. It's a long journey from cradle to grave.

We shall be attacked throughout our lives. So we need to be armed. But the next two verses, 9 and 10, give us the undergirding that we need for the long haul.

They tell us about God's purpose for Christians in verse 9 and the reason for Christ's death in verse 10. So verse 9, For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's wrath, the wrath to come, as Paul describes it in chapter 1, verse 10, that is the great reality that hangs over the future of the world. But those who turn to Christ are saved from it.

God has not destined us who are Christians. for wrath. What then is our destiny? It is to obtain, to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[37 : 03] We can't work for it. We can't earn it. But it's the gift of God's tender, yearning love for us. Salvation, eternal life. Now look onto verse 10, because there's something very interesting in that verse, which we might easily miss.

Here's the verse. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that, whether we are awake or asleep, in other words, alive or have died when he comes, so that whether we're awake or asleep, we might live with him.

Now Paul is teaching us the ultimate reason for Christ's death. If somebody were to ask you, why is it that Christ died?

If you've been a Christian for some time, you'll have a number of good answers stored in your memory. So you might say, he died to obey his father and fulfill the father's will.

Yes, indeed he did. Or you might say, he died to pay the penalty for our sins. Yes, indeed he did. You might say, he died to show just how much he loves us.

[38 : 13] Yes, he did. Or you might say, he died to propitiate the anger of God the father. He did indeed. And those are all fine, true, important answers.

But Paul is saying something else here. Just look at verse 10. He's telling us that Jesus died for us, so that we might live with him.

If he hadn't died, we would be cut off from him forever. But he has died, so that we might live with him forever. Now we know what it is to live with other people in this world.

When we're children, we live with our brothers and sisters and parents. When we're older, we might share a flat with somebody, one or two friends. If we marry, we live with the person we marry.

But these are all temporary arrangements for this world. But to live with Jesus, that is why he died for us, because he wants to enjoy our company in his house forever.

[39 : 17] Do you remember his words in John chapter 14? Don't let your hearts be troubled, he says. In my father's house are many rooms. I'm going on ahead to prepare a place for you.

And I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, you may be also. He says in John chapter 17, as he prays to God the Father, he says, Father, Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

The heart's desire of the Lord Jesus is to share his glorious home with the likes of you and me. That is why he died, according to verse 10.

Don't think that you're not valued by him. You may be small in your own eyes, but you're not small in his eyes. Therefore, Paul concludes verse 11, therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Well, friends, these two paragraphs, they open up to us a view on reality, which the world, with all its so-called wisdom, knows nothing about. The world just can't bear to think about death.

[40 : 43] It approaches death either with horror or with a stoical hard-headedness. And the world refuses to accept that the Lord will return and bring all its people, all the people of the world, to a just and final judgment.

The world doesn't believe in judgment. But God has revealed these things to us here in 1 Thessalonians for our blessing so that we should walk with confidence through our earthly life and be unafraid of everything that lies before us.

If you're not yet a believer, don't deny yourself a home in glory. Don't set your course towards the wrath to come.

Come to Jesus because he died for us so that we might live with him. Let's bow our heads and we'll pray together.

Our dear Savior Jesus, have mercy on each one of us, we pray. For those who are clinging on to life in this world, open their eyes and help them to see what is at stake and mercifully draw them to trust you.

[42 : 09] And for us who are already yours, equip us to do battle with the deceptions of the devil and bring us safely to your eternal home. we ask it for your dear name's sake.

Amen. Amen. Amen.