



STANDING FAST IN THE LORD

God Wants You to be Informed

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Our hope in death is our resurrection in Christ to eternal life (13-18).

- *God wants us to know the truth about the death of a believer so that we may grieve with hope (13).*
- *Our hope is in the resurrection power of God to resurrect all who are in Christ (14).*
- *When Jesus returns, all believers will receive resurrected, eternal bodies to live together with the Lord forever (15-17).*
- *Encourage one another with these words (18)!*

In the early church, believers were expecting Jesus to return at any moment, hoping that he would come again to establish his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. They thought that his return would happen within their lifetime. Death would not be an issue because Jesus would come again to destroy death for all of future eternity, so when believers in the early church began to die, there was some confusion and some false teaching that began to arise in connection to the return of Jesus and the resurrection. In the Lord's mercy, he preserved and protected the truth. This passage is one of those key passages that the Lord gave us to inform us of the true hope of the gospel that is our eternal hope in the face of the death of believers.

As is often the case in the New Testament, the death of a believer is communicated as someone who has fallen asleep. This is not an affirmation of the errant view of soul sleep, which is the idea that when people die they enter into a state of unconsciousness or soul sleep until the return of Jesus. This can't be the case because it contradicts so much that is clearly stated about life after life on this earth. Jesus himself gave us the story of Lazarus and the rich man, who both immediately entered eternal life (Luke 16:19-31). Once one of the criminals on the cross next to Jesus came to faith in the Lord, Jesus told him that "today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Through the apostle Paul, the Lord revealed the truth that to be absent the body is to be present with the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:8), and through the apostle John, the Lord gave us a glimpse into the throne room in heaven where we see "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9). So why use the term "sleep?" Because death is not death! Though a believer dies, yet he lives (John 11:25). Sleep is the way we view the death of a believer because we will see them again!

This is our hope in the face of death. God wants us to know the truth. He wants us to grieve with hope, and our hope is the resurrection power of God to resurrect all who are in Christ. When Jesus returns, all believers will receive resurrected, eternal bodies to live together with the Lord forever. Those who are with the Lord in spirit will be resurrected first as they return with Christ, and those who are still alive on earth will be resurrected and ascend to meet Christ and be together with the great multitude with the Lord, forevermore! This message of the gospel is our hope, so encourage one another with these words.

1. Read verse 13. What does God want us to be? How does this truth encourage you? How is it connected to God's Word?
2. Why is grief in response to the death of someone we know and love an appropriate response? For a believer, why is grief with no hope inappropriate? How does a believer grieve with hope?



STANDING FAST IN THE LORD

3. Read verse 14. What is the proof that God has given us that he has the power to resurrect us? What is the promise of God in relationship to the resurrection that's found in this verse? Do you believe this? How does it give you hope?
4. Read verses 15-17. For believers who are already in the presence of the Lord with spiritual bodies that reflect their physical earthly bodies (Matthew 17:1-3; Revelation 7:9; etc.), they will be resurrected physically at the second coming of Christ. For those who are alive when Christ returns, they will be caught up together with them, resurrected instantly in eternal, physical bodies. Why is the resurrection so important? How does it give us hope? How does it reveal God's complete redemption of his creation?
5. With these truths, how can you encourage other believers who have lost loved ones who are believers?
6. What about those who aren't sure if their loved one was a believer? Additionally, what about those who grieve with no hope because they do not have life in Christ? Based on the information in this passage, what would you say to these two groups of people?
7. Is the resurrection of Christ to eternal life your hope in the face of death? If not, why not turn to Christ today. He is our hope in life and death!