

WALKING OUT HIS WORD EACH DAY

The I Thessalonians Series #12

April 29th, 2018

TEXT: I Thessalonians 4:13-18

CONSIDER THIS: Today we begin an in-depth study of what is called “the rapture of the church.” There is no doubt that this is an interesting topic that has garnered much attention (and generated much confusion). The Apostle Paul wanted his Christian friends to understand this doctrine for he most certainly had the heart of a teacher. But even more importantly, Paul wanted his teachings on the rapture to be a source of hope, comfort and encouragement and this was because he had the heart of a shepherd. Don’t ever forget that this section of Scripture ends with a command: *“Therefore encourage each other with these words.”* This is what we will do as we are **WALKING OUT HIS WORD EACH DAY.**

GOD’S WORD TEACHES US ...

I THE RAPTURE

- A) The “rapture” of the church is that moment in time when Jesus Christ will, **in the twinkling of an eye** (I Corinthians 15:51-52), take the church (the true church is comprised of every born again believer between the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2:38-47, and those alive when the trumpet sounds) directly into His presence in Heaven in fulfillment of His promise in John 14:1-3. Sometime after the rapture the final 7 year period of tribulation, the coming wrath, will begin. (I Thessalonians 1:10 = see sermons 10 and 11 in this series).
- B) The term rapture comes from I Thessalonians 4:17 “caught up”. The Greek verb Paul uses here is **harpazo** which means to steal, suddenly carry off, to snatch away. The Latin form of this verb is **rapto** which also means to seize and carry off. Rapture is simply the English form of the Latin rapto.
- C) The timing of the rapture is “imminent”. It can happen at any time and there is no other prophetic event that must take place before it. It might **not** happen soon (as we experience time), but it could happen today.

II THE HOPE THAT ENCOURAGES

- A) Paul wrote I Thessalonians 4:13-18 to **encourage** Christians. In verse 13 the Thessalonian Christians were so sensitive to “imminency” that they had not realized that some among them would die before the rapture. Now they were wondering if they

had missed the rapture or if their dead fellow Christians were excluded. Their knowledge was incomplete and Paul did not want them:

1. to be ignorant
2. to grieve like those who have no hope.

NOTE: Hope is an important term in this passage. Today we use hope to primarily convey a wish, a desire or an emotion. In the New Testament, hope means assurance, certainty, confidence in what will be ... *“while we wait for the blessed **hope** – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2:13).

★ The general population in Paul’s day had NO HOPE of being in Heaven or experiencing a conscious joy in an afterlife. They faced death with despair or hopeless resignation – **they were without hope**. Today, the general population of our culture has a FALSE HOPE that because they believe themselves to be “basically good” they assume they will be okay when they die. We must be aware of this when we evangelize.

B) If you study 4:13-18 carefully you will notice how Paul personalizes this doctrine for each and every believer (he repeatedly says “we” and explains that those who sleep in Christ are included).

C) All theology should ultimately be Christ-centered to the glory of God, yet God Himself makes much of His children! Implicit within the theology of I Thessalonians is the promise that the unstoppable eternal plan of the Sovereign Creator, Owner and Ruler of the universe is 100% attuned to each and every one of His children.

1. Genesis 1:26-27 = man created in God’s image and appointed to rule creation as His steward.
2. Psalm 8:3-8 = The Creator loves man.
3. Hebrews 2:5-12 = Jesus Christ, our brother who shares His inheritance with us.

These great truths tell the story of our glorious future.
The rapture of the church will play a central role in
the unfolding of God’s plan for His children.
The proper study of I Thessalonians 4:13-18 will
always result in hope, comfort and joyful expectation.

“Therefore, encourage each other with these words.”