First Thessalonians 4:13-18

4:13 **<u>Paul warned them against ignorance leading to excessive sorrow at death like the pagans.</u>**

1. Proper teaching and preaching will save saints from ignorance and its consequences.
   a. Ignorance is the blight of man – he is born ignorant and learns nothing, blinded and hardened by a sovereign Power (Isaiah 44:16-20; Ps 49:6-14; John 8:44-45).
   b. He sent apostles, prophets, evangelists, and bishops for knowledge (Ep 4:11-14).
   c. His pastors provide knowledge and understanding, not entertainment (Jer 3:15).
2. There is a particular battle of our spiritual warfare against the coming of Jesus Christ.
   a. Satan cannot have us filled with hope, for he has none himself, the world would not attract us, we would greatly seek holiness, and we could bear all persecution.
   b. There have been attempts to destroy the hope and truth of the resurrection from the beginning (I Cor 15:12; II Thess 2:1-3; II Tim 2:16-18).
   c. Pagans, who live and think according to Satan, are without hope (Eph 2:1-3).
   d. The rejection of true baptism – by burial and resurrection in water – by many so-called Christians forfeits the figure of the resurrection (I Cor 15:29; I Pet 3:21).
3. There are facts to be known about the dead – the righteous dead – that will comfort us.
   a. We should comfort one another with these facts as part of our fellowship (4:18).
   b. Evil communications – false ideas of the resurrection – will ruin us (I Co 15:33).
   c. Knowledge of Jesus Christ without hope of heaven is only misery (I Cor 15:19).
4. The world, because it has no hope of the hereafter, sorrow excessively about death.
   a. Sickness, death, and funerals are horrible events to the average unbeliever.
   b. They hide them all in sterilized hospitals, mortuaries, crematoriums, etc.
5. We here encounter the word “sleep” referring to those who have died in the Lord.
   a. Their bodies are merely sleeping in the ground waiting for the resurrection.
   b. Their spirits and souls are in heaven very alive in God’s presence (Heb 12:23).
   c. This use of “sleep” is comforting and common (I Kings 1:21; 2:10; Matt 27:52; Luke 8:52-53; John 11:11-13; Acts 7:60; 13:36; I Cor 15:6,18; II Peter 3:4).
6. While there is much to be commended regarding Preterist understanding of Scripture, there is also much danger and a severe lack of rightly dividing the Word of truth.
   a. We are partial Preterists by our understanding of the significance of 70 A.D. and the numerous passages in the New Testament fulfilled by that remarkable event.
   b. But we also understand Paul’s strong warning about rightly dividing Scripture, which dividing would not be taught unless there were divisions to make.
      (1) The full Preterist position has no hope, as there is nothing better to come.
      (2) There is no resurrection in the future, for it already occurred in 70 A.D.
      (3) They are so guilty of the very heresy Paul condemned (II Tim 2:16-18).
      (4) There was no resurrection then of the just and unjust (Jn 5:28; Ac 24:15).
      (5) The Lord Jesus has not yet put down all rule and authority (I Cor 15:24).
      (6) They provide no time for fulfilling Daniel’s prophecies of many years.
      (7) They provide no time for the falling away – apostasy – Paul required.
      (8) They provide no time for establishing the Man of Sin in God’s temple.
      (9) They hold the strange position that we are to take the world for Christ.

4:14 <u>The resurrection of Jesus Christ is proof that His elect will also be raised from the dead</u>.

1. If we believe that Jesus died, then He must have died so that others would live also.
2. If we believe that Jesus rose, then He has won victory over death His saints shall enjoy.
3. Those who die in the Lord are not lost – they will be delivered to us again in the future.
4. The saints who have already died – gone to sleep in Jesus – are with Him (Heb 12:23).
5. Leaving the body – separation of soul and body – is to be with Christ (II Cor 5:6-8).
6. Jesus Christ is the firstfruits of them that sleep – He will raise them also (I Cor 15:20).

4:15 <u>Paul gives inspired teaching as to the order of events at the final coming of Jesus Christ</u>.

1. The instruction we are about to receive cannot be learned from man or any observation in creation – it is by the pure revelation of God to His apostles and prophets.
   a. Thank God for His inspired Scriptures, which reveal the mysteries of the gospel.
   b. What hopelessness awaits those trusting man's educational institutions, scientific research, psychoanalysis, or any other field of human inquiry.
2. Those saints still living at the coming of Christ will not preceed those already dead.
   a. **Prevent**. To come, arrive, or appear before, to precede; to outrun, outstrip.
   b. Much comfort exists regarding the dead, as they will be first in the resurrection.

4:16 <u>Paul further details some of the events that will take place our Lord's second coming</u>.

1. The Lord shall descend from heaven, as He departed – bodily and visibly (Acts 1:9-11).
   a. He Himself shall descend – this is not a figurative descent of national judgment.
   b. He is in the third heaven, and He will come from there (Lu 23:43; II Co 12:1-4).
2. He will descend with a powerful shout, just as He plainly described (John 5:25-29).
   a. The voice of Jesus Christ is glorious in power (Luke 4:33-37; Psalm 29:7; 33:9).
   b. He called the dead to life while on earth (John 11:43-44; Luke 7:1-18; 8:52-56).
   c. It is the voice of the Son of God that is the instrumental cause of regeneration.
   d. It is the voice of the Son of God that is the instrumental cause of resurrection.
   e. These words announce and define two resurrections taught elsewhere (Re 20:6).
   f. The voice of a mere preacher or evangelist is not used at all in either quickening.
3. The archangel will assist Him.
   a. **Archangel**. An angel of the highest rank. **Arch**. In titles of office, rank, or dignity: meaning, 'Chief, principal, -in-chief; superior, master-; one who occupies a position or rank above those who bear the simple title'; as Archbishop, Archdeacon, Archduke.
   b. Jesus Christ is coming with many angels (II Thess 1:7).
4. The trumpet of God will sound.
   a. It is called the last trumpet (I Cor 15:52).
   b. So how many trumpets should we expect after His coming?
5. The dead in Christ shall rise first.
   a. What shall rise? Their bodies of course, because that is all that is buried.
   b. Where are their souls? Coming with Christ in the air to be reunited to bodies.
   c. Paul answered foolish questions about bodies like so: "Thou fool" (I Co 15:36)!
6. There are not multiple resurrections as modern speculators imagine, for Paul taught plainly that there shall be one resurrection of the just and unjust (Acts 24:15).

4:17 <u>Paul then describes what will happen to us who are still alive when this event occurs</u>.

1. Since the living require no resurrection, they shall be caught up body, soul, and spirit.
2. We shall be caught up to the first heaven and meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air.
   a. This is better than walking on water, for we will be suspended by divine power.
   b. And so shall we ever be with the Lord, in a glorified body, soul, and spirit.
3. "Then cometh the end," for our resurrection brings the end of this world (I Cor 15:24).
   a. He is reigning now, but He has not put down all rule, authority, and power.
   b. He will deliver up the kingdom to God, when we shall be declared His forever.
4. We shall meet the Lord Jesus in the air, as He does not return for a place on this earth.
   a. Christ-hating Jews and the followers of their fables hallucinate about Jerusalem.
   b. C.I. Scofield and other carnal Israelites miss the entire New Testament.
   c. Jerusalem, Israel, that now is, has less to do with Jesus than does San Francisco.
   d. The Ashkenazi Jews have infected the world with their nationalist ambitions, but we know that all property promises to Israel have been fulfilled (Josh 21:43-45).

4:18 <u>The truth of future events should cause us to comfort one another with this great hope</u>.

1. "Wherefore" indicates that good reason has just been given for our mutual comfort.
2. **Comfort**. To strengthen (morally or spiritually); to encourage, hearten, inspirit, incite.
   a. Can there be any greater encouragement in the face of tribulation (Rom 8:18)?
   b. Can there be any greater motivation to hate the sins of this world (Phil 3:20-21)?
   c. Can there be any greater hopefulness for those losing loved ones (Jn 11:20-27)?
3. Comforting "one another" emphasizes the action of one individual comforting another, which would bring great good in each body of Christ if done widely and fervently.
4. Paul admits before closing they comforted each other, but he sought more (5:11,14).
5. Their mutual comforting was to be based specifically on the glorious words of revelation and promise he had given them – the specific events of our Lord's coming.
6. The saving power of resurrection truth – the hope of something far better than this life to motivate us to service – is only as good as our memory of it (I Cor 15:2; Col 1:23).
7. Our conversation is in heaven – after the resurrection – with new bodies (Phil 3:18-21).
8. Every baptism witnessed by saints ought to cause rejoicing (I Peter 3:21; I Cor 15:29).
9. The gospel is full of blessed hope, and we should never let Satan, the world, or our flesh steal it from us. These three conspiring enemies want to destroy our great hope.

<u>Conclusion</u>:

1. *What a chapter! Reminders of holiness and pleasing God! Warnings against fornication! Exhortations to brotherly love and vocational diligence! And comfort and hope in the coming of Jesus Christ!*
2. *What affect should the coming of Christ have in our lives? If you knew He was coming tomorrow, what you do today? Why should we not live this way every day, for we know not when He is coming!*
3. *One of us shall likely die soon, unless the Lord comes quickly. Are we full of confidence about them?*