

LIVING ON THE THRESHOLD OF ETERNITY

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TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18 (NIV)

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words.

INTRODUCTION

We live at the threshold of eternity. Who knows when we will step through that door?

I. FOR SOME, ETERNITY WILL BEGIN AT DEATH (vv.13-15).

A. THE GRAVE CANNOT DESTROY OUR ETERNAL HOPE (v.13).

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, “The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”

B. JESUS CONQUERED THE GRAVE (vv.14-15).

Continuing with his thoughts, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:51...

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.”

55 “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. **57** But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

II. FOR SOME, ETERNITY WILL BEGIN WITH THE RAPTURE (vv.16-18).

A. WHEN JESUS RETURNS FOR THE CHURCH, NOTHING WILL STAND IN HIS WAY (v.16-17).

Jesus told his disciples in John14:1-4, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. **2** My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. **4** You know the way to the place where I am going.”

B. THE RAPTURE WILL BE THE “CATCHING AWAY” OF THOSE WHO ARE WAITING FOR HIM (vv.16-17).

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

III. FOR ALL WHO BELIEVE, THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE LIVES IN THEM NOW (vv.13 & 18).

A. HOPE BUILDS THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH.

The first and last verses of this passage serve as bookends for the truth between.

Note verse 13. “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope...”

And concluding with verse 18, “Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

The word of God, mixed with faith and hope, fuel our expectations!

B. HOPE CALLS US TO LIVE FOR GOD WITH ETERNITY IN MIND.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-14 reminds us,

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
2 a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
3 a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
6 a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
7 a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
8 a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.
9 What do workers gain from their toil? **10** I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. **11** He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. **12** I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. **13** That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. **14** I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him. - NIV

CONCLUSION

Illustration: The Temp Folder in a Computer

“The files in the 'temp' folder of a computer are once important, but are not essential after its usage. They become redundant soon after they are used. Computer experts suggest that as long as the date of a file in the 'temp' folder is not today, it is safe to delete. Accumulating too many of such files in the 'temp' folder will take up too many disk space and will slow down the system. These files are only temporary. There are too many things in our lives that can be classified as 'temp files'. They don't yield eternal value. Do you have too many of such 'temp files' in your life? They are not needed in eternity. They only give you extra burdens and slow you down in your spiritual walk with God.”

--<https://bible.org/illustration/temp-folder-computer>

Being this close to eternity, we must be careful not to allow anything to slow us down. No one knows when we will step through that door into eternity. We could enter at anytime.