

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

First RPC Durham

I. The Hope of the Resurrection of the Dead (vv 13-14)**A. Exposition of the Text**

- 1) The causes of this reminder (v 13)
 - a) Lest we be ignorant of what happens after death (Heb 9:27)
 - b) Lest we have unrelenting sorrow
- 2) The ground of our hope (v 14a)
 - a) The historicity of Christ's death and resurrection (1 Cor 15:3-6)
 - b) The bodily reality of Christ's death and resurrection (Jn 20:27).
- 3) The hope of the resurrection of the dead (v 14b)
 - a) As grounded in truth
 - b) As a universal reality (2 Tim 4:1)
 - c) As an exclusive comfort (Mk 5:39; 1 Cor 15:55-57)

B. Uses from the Text

- 1) We are not to be ignorant, but are to have an informed faith.
- 2) We are not to grieve as unbelievers, but as Christians.
 - a) Which means first that we indeed grieve loss (Gen 23:2).
 - b) Yet we do not indulge in sinful and excessive sorrow as unbelievers do. John Flavel in his treatise *Facing Grief* (Banner of Truth) describes this worldly sorrow as:
 - i. When our sorrow causes us to despise God's mercies and gifts;
 - ii. When our sorrow leads us to be desensitized to the wickedness of sin;
 - iii. When our sorrow diverts us from the worship of God, and particularly from going to God in prayer;
 - iv. When we allow our sorrow to be so prolonged and excessive that they overwhelm our bodies, bringing about physical harm;
 - v. When we, in our sorrow, are bitter against God;
 - vi. When we do things which we know will only further provoke our sorrow; and,
 - vii. When, in our sorrow, we deafen our ears to the counsel and comfort given us for our relief and support.

II. The History of the Resurrection of the Dead (vv 15-17)**A. Exposition of the Text**

- 1) The authority of this teaching
- 2) The order of the resurrection: The dead will rise first (v 16b), then those who are alive (vv 15b, 17a)
- 3) The history of the resurrection:
 - a) The coming of the Lord descending from heaven (Acts 1:11).
 - b) The accompanying wonders alongside our Lord's return:
 - c) The general resurrection (WCF 32.2)

d) [After the resurrection, the judgement of all things] (*Heidelberg Catechism* 52; 2 Cor 5:10)

e) [The quickness of these things] (1 Cor 15:52)

4) The permanence of the resurrection

B. Doctrines from the Text

- 1) There are only two comings of Christ.
- 2) The purposes of those comings are different (Heb 9:28, ESV).
- 3) The day of Christ's return is the Last Day.

C. Uses from the Text

- 1) To the unbeliever, this is to be the day of salvation (2 Cor 6:2b)
- 2) To the believer, we are to have great anticipation and expectation for this day. (2 Cor 4:17-18)

III. The Help of the Resurrection of the Dead (vv 18)**A. The resurrection of the dead is a corporate comfort**

- 1) How, or when, do we comfort one another with these words?
- 2) Why, or to what end, do we comfort one another with this hope? (2 Thes 2:16-17)

B. The resurrection of the dead is a personal comfort when we are separated from the Church.

- 1) We are comforted by the Spirit when we are alone, separated from the Church, such as in times of sickness (Ezk 11:16)
- 2) We are comforted by the Spirit when we are discouraged by those who hate the Lord and His people (Psa 28:7)

C. The excellencies of comfort of the resurrection of the dead

- 1) The excellent nature of the resurrection (1 Cor 9:25, 15:42): As it is imperishable (1 Cor 9:25); and incorruptible (1 Cor 15:42)
- 2) The excellent benefits of the resurrection of the dead: To be free from the presence of our own sin (Rev 21:27); To be free from the presence of others' sin; To be free from the presence of the curse (Rev 21:4); To be free from the presence of sorrow and uncertainty; To be in the eternal state of blessedness with the Church triumphant (Mt 5:8); To be doing that for which we are created without hindrance or infirmity (Rev 7:15); To experience for eternity the great wonder and riches of God's presence free from fear or shame.
- 3) The substance of our hope, which is greatest blessing of all: To be with the Lord forever (v 17b; Lk 10:38-42).

D. Applications for making use of this comfort in appropriate times:

- 1) We ought to meditate upon this comfort now, that we should be prepared for the great variety of circumstances which the Lord will bring about or permit in His providence (Num 13:1)
- 2) Circumstances: In plenty (1 Kgs 10:7); In want; In normalcy; In uncertainty (Jn 14:2-3); In growing in grace (1 Cor 13:12); In spiritual setbacks; In rejoicing (Rev 19:7); In sorrow (Jb 19:25-27); In health; In sickness or pain (Rom 8:23); In the face of death (Psa 33:5)