

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the hope and resurrection of believers, with a focus on the second coming of Christ and the guarantee of our future with God.

Duration: 56:56

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 6:5, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

Topics: "Second Coming"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by expressing gratitude for the opportunity to share aspects of the gospel of Jesus Christ and encourage believers. He acknowledges the struggles and shortcomings that believers may face throughout the week but emphasizes the importance of not grieving over them. The speaker then paraphrases 1 Thessalonians 4:14, highlighting the central truth of Christianity that Jesus died and rose again, and the belief that those who have died in Jesus are alive in Him and will be brought with Him when He returns. The sermon concludes with a call to alertness and readiness for the second coming of Jesus, emphasizing the importance of living in obedience and fulfilling God's calling.

Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles to First Thessalonians, chapter four, beginning in verse 13. First Thessalonians, chapter four, verse 13. I want to say it's a great privilege for me to be here tonight to share with you.

At least some aspects of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to encourage you. That if you are in Christ. If you truly are in Christ.

You are beloved. And you have great, great hope. If you're like me, sometimes throughout the week.

You find yourself looking in the mirror of God's word and you find yourself. Falling short. Struggling so many things, your mind wandering in prayer and in the word.

Actions and attitudes that may not be precisely what the Lord would will for your life. And it can become discouraging, even though you're struggling to walk with him. But know this in Christ, if you are in Christ, you are beloved.

That doesn't change. Your sin has no power. To wash away the blood.

But his blood has great power. To wash away your sin. So be encouraged, especially as we study this passage that has so much to do with hope.

The resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our resurrection and our gathering together with him. Let's read verse 13. But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this, we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not proceed. Those who have fallen asleep for the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for these words, these words of encouragement and comfort. Father, these words that communicate to us urgency, Lord, help your people tonight.

Help me. To teach your word, Lord. Something I cannot do part from from your great help.

And Lord, help your people. Open their mind and their heart that they might see glorious truth beyond my words, truth revealed by the Holy Spirit through the scriptures, that they might be encouraged and strengthened to walk with you with joy and great, great hope. Father, I ask this in Jesus name, amen.

Now, just a short summary. When we read this text, it seems like everything in the text gets swallowed up by the second coming and we miss the point. You see, in the earlier part of this chapter, Paul is talking about very practical things, love for the brethren, moral purity, the need not to be busy bodies, but to concentrate on your own garden.

He's talking about all these practical things. And then all of a sudden he just swings over into the second coming. Well, you need to understand why.

He does that because there's another problem that needs a practical answer. These believers are grieving because they're not really sure what's going to happen to those Christians who have died before Christ returns. Will they be lost forever to death or will they somehow have a secondary resurrection that won't be quite as spectacular? Will they miss out on all the benefits of Christ's coming? They were perplexed and they were grieving like men who have no hope, like men of this world, the psalmist says, whose portion is in this life.

That's the way they were acting. And that's no way for a Christian to act. If there's one thing I could back up on the last 30 years and start all over again from the time I was converted in college until now, it would be to demonstrate more hope and more of the joy of the Lord.

And if you're younger than me, then I encourage you to start doing that now. The joy and the hope that Christ gives us is something outstanding that causes us to be so different from everyone else. It's not just a different morality.

It's not just that there are things that we don't do. Those shouldn't be the most significant things. The most significant things should be the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in our life, creating in us hope and joy, great hope and joy.

Now, I want us to look at the text. We're going to continue on. We look we only got through verse 13 last Wednesday, but I'm going to do my best to make more progress than that tonight.

So let's let's look at what's going on here. Verse 14, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. Now, before we get there, let me back up and say one other thing that I want to be sure not to miss.

One of the truths that most stands out to me when I read this text is love. You say, well, it doesn't even talk about love, love for the brethren, love for each other, this extraordinary love that so validated the gospel in the first century. That's what I see in this passage.

And you say, why these believers were suffering persecution and anyone suffering persecution wants to get out. They want to go home. They want the Lord to come.

But these believers so loved the other believers who had already died that they could not even bear the thought of eternal bliss without them. And that's something that I want all of you to think about. One of the ways in which we'll leave a mark on this community is through the way that we love one another.

And one of the things that the Lord will do, especially you need to listen to me, you young believers, you want to know what the Lord is going to do the rest of your life. He is going to work and work in your life to teach you to love. Just don't be as slow in learning as I have been.

Yes, some of you young men in college and bold and manly and all sorts of things. Listen to me. The one thing he's going to want to do with you is teach you to love, to love him, to love your brothers and sisters in Christ, to love your spouse, to love your children, to love your enemies.

If he accomplishes that. He's accomplished something tremendous, he's conformed you to the image of Jesus Christ, and this is the way they loved. And so Paul comes to them and he's going to encourage them, don't grieve, and he's going to do it by stating several truths that we see in verse 14.

Now, the first thing I want to do is on verse 14, as I've written out a paraphrase, because I want you to get the gist of everything that's being said. So just listen. If we believe in hold to the central truth of Christianity, that Jesus not only died, but also rose again, then we must also recognize, hold to, rely upon the truth that those who have died in Jesus are alive in Jesus and that God will bring them with Jesus when he returns.

Now, I want you to see something. It's very important that you catch this, that not only do we believe in Jesus, but those of us who believe in Jesus have somehow been united with Jesus in his death, in his resurrection. And Paul plays on this in many different ways in his epistles.

But the way I want you to see it tonight is this. One of the central truths of the Christian faith is that the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ is a historical event. It's not a metaphor.

It didn't happen only spiritually. It wasn't something that the apostles made up in hope against hope. No, the central truth of Christianity is that his resurrection and his ascension was a historical.

They were historical events in real time. See, not only did they see him resurrected, but what else did they see? They saw him with their eyes and were historical witnesses to his ascension. Now, here's what you've got to say.

His resurrection and his ascension throughout the New Testament, they are guarantees, evidences, guarantees that we also will be resurrected and we also will ascend. Someone says to us, how do you know you're going to resurrect? How do you know that you're going to be taken up into glory? The answer, because historically he was resurrected, historically he was taken up into glory. I want to read from First Corinthians 15, 12 through 14.

Just listen to what Paul does. Now, if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain.

Your faith also is vain. Do you see the seamless relationship between what happened to Christ historically and what is going to happen to us historically? To deny one is to deny the other. If you deny, of course, that Christ resurrected from the dead, then, of course, you're denying the possibility that believers are going to resurrect from the dead.

But it also works the other way. If you deny that believers are going to resurrect from the dead, then you're also denying that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. And so the idea that Paul is trying to put forth is this.

Believers, listen to me. If the Holy Spirit has so illuminated your mind that you have come to believe with all your being that Christ is raised and ascended, then you must believe that you will be raised and that you will ascend. Do you see the relationship? So often, especially in this church, we talk about the cross, we talk about the cross, we talk about the cross.

But never forget, you have not preached the gospel if you talk about the cross and you stop there. As a matter of fact, any of you who have read the book of Acts should come to the conclusion that actually he speaks more about the resurrection and ascension than he does the cross, because that was the great validation of the cross. Do you see his resurrection and his ascension? Now, I want us to go on and look, it says, but we are verse 14, for we believe that Jesus died and rose again.

Even so, God will bring them with him. Those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. Now, what I want to do is, it is really a difficult text, honestly, but I want to give you a literal reading of the text.

The way that the words are arranged in the original Greek text. This is what it says. So also, God, those who have fallen asleep through Jesus, he will bring them with him.

Now, it's an awkward construction. Just listen for a moment. It says, so also, God, and then it stops.

So also, God, then it says, those who have fallen asleep through Jesus and then it returns to God, he will bring with him. Now, what is Paul trying to do? Well, it seems complicated in English, but in Greek, it's very, very certain what he's trying to do. Paul is emphasizing, doing everything he can grammatically to emphasize God.

That God, God as creator, God is Lord of the universe, God, who is omnipotent. That God is the author and guarantee of our resurrection and our ascension, and it kind of works like this. He's saying, listen to

me, God.

Raised Jesus, God, at this moment, is keeping the spirits of the saints who have departed with him in glory. And God will see to it that those departed saints that you so love will be brought to you again at the second coming of Jesus Christ. It's all God.

Everything you know about God assures it assures you. That not only will you rise, but those that you love so dearly will rise with you. Now, I want to read something that I've written to kind of give you the order of this idea of resurrection and ascension.

I'm going to do this several times tonight because I want us to see clearly what's going on. Jesus will bring the departed saints with him when he descends from heaven. They will be immediately reunited in a flash with their resurrected bodies.

You see that he's going to bring them when he appears in the sky, he's going to bring those departed saints with him. And immediately when those bodies resurrect, those departed saints will reunite in a flash with their resurrected and transformed bodies. Then they and we together.

Will ascend, transform to meet the Lord in the air, and we will remain forever with the Lord. When a lot of people just read this text, they think, well, what he's saying is the the saints who have departed, they are going to resurrect first and then they're going to ascend first and then we are going to follow behind. That's not what it's teaching.

But as well, let's say that I'm standing here and I'm beside the grave of a dear brother in Christ, that when the trumpet blows, I look that saint has risen in a glorified body. And no sooner do I have a chance to say that's amazing, but I see that I've also been transformed. His spirit has been united with this newly transformed body.

Then all of us together ascend to meet the Lord. This one rises first, but we both ascend together to meet the Lord. It's a beautiful picture of unity, a beautiful picture of the oneness of the church.

Now, he says here in verse 14, the last phrase, those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, literally those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. It's a participle here and it's passive. So what it what it's actually saying is those who have been put to sleep through Jesus.

Now, not put to sleep like you may put your dog or cat to sleep, but those who have been put to sleep as a mother would rock her baby in her arms. So now look at this death, this gigantic, terrible, horrible, disgusting, dark thing that brings an end to everything good and initiates rot and decay. This monster, this conqueror of men that enslaves them to fear.

Hasn't just been domesticated, it's been destroyed. Destroyed. So the believers now simply sleep.

Now, again, we need to be careful. Doesn't mean that when the believer dies, he's asleep there in that body awaiting his resurrection, unconscious. Now, Paul makes it clear in other texts, as I said last week, that the moment we die.

And our body perish, our body lays in the tomb, the moment we die, our spirit ascends to God. Ascends to Christ and that spirit is there and there as long as Christ is there until the second coming and at the trumpet sound, the dead in Christ's eyes are united with their spirit and transformed bodies. So that's the

way it's going to be.

Now, I want us to just listen for a moment to a passage in Acts, you know, the death of Stephen stoning was horrifying. And a lot of times what they would do is tie someone's hands behind their back, push them off a cliff or a low, not necessarily had to be a high cliff, just push them off so that their bodies fell face forward. And then they would take boulders as large as they could pick up and just crush the person.

But listen to this. When they had driven him, that is, Stephen, out of the city, they began stoning him. And the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, Lord, Jesus, receive my spirit. Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them. Having said this, he fell asleep.

He fell asleep. They're piling stones upon him, and I'm sure it hurt. I don't know how much the Lord preserved him from pain or if he did at all.

But at the end. He wasn't swallowed by that lion we call death. He simply went to sleep in my life, I have seen many people die and I have seen some die violent, horrifying deaths that I'll never be able to erase from my brain.

Death is a monster. Young person and maybe hasn't seen this much of the world, death is a monster, but Christ has conquered death. Death is a Leviathan.

And as Joe, as God told Job, just stretch out your hand and touch Leviathan, you'll never forget it. It's the same way with death. Stretch out your hand and try to touch death, you'll never forget it.

But death has been conquered by the one greater Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Now, look at the last part of 14. It says those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

Now, I don't want to labor the point, but it's very interesting that Paul just says Jesus here. It would be more common for Paul to say Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus, but he says Jesus. And I think there's a reason.

What is Paul doing? He's emphasizing the humanity of Jesus. Never forget, he was God in the flesh, but he was in the flesh and he was a real man and he's emphasizing his humanity. And it goes back to the fact that God raised Jesus.

God raised the man Jesus from the dead and the man Jesus ascended to the right hand of God. In the same way, he's identifying with us and with our humanity, if God can raise this man. Who had all the sins of his people heaped upon his head, suffered the wrath of God and died a death.

If God can resurrect this Jesus. God will resurrect everyone who believes in this Jesus. Jesus.

Never forget, Saint, as you go on in your Christian life, whether it's pride or immaturity or whatever, you're going to have the tendency to pin different things upon yourself. It's so supposedly distinguish, distinguishes you from everyone else, from unbelievers and sometimes believers. Maybe the way you act or the way you dress or the things you do and you don't do, it distinguishes you and you wear it as a pin.

As you get older, if you do grow in Christ, you'll tear all those pins off of you. You'll throw them away. And the only thing that distinguishes you from anybody is you are clinging to Jesus.

Jesus is your only hope. Just Jesus, and it is enough, he is enough. Now, let's look at 15.

He says, for this we say to you by the word of the Lord. Now, some people who really don't like the scriptures make a lot out of this. You know, is Paul saying, OK, now what I'm going to tell you is infallible, inerrant, and you can trust in it.

The rest of the stuff was just my opinion. That is not what Paul is saying at all. There's no reason to go down that kind of road.

It's just mere foolishness. Paul is simply emphasizing writing in this way to emphasize the truthfulness of the extraordinary things he's about to say. He's talking about the end of the world here.

He wants to emphasize this didn't come from me. I didn't make this up. This was given to me, this is the word of the Lord.

Now, he says that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord. A lot of skeptics have made a lot out of this. You know why? Because Paul says we, as though including himself.

And they say, well, here we go. There's an error in the Bible. Paul thought that Jesus was going to come in his lifetime.

That is not at all what Paul is doing. He's doing something very common that he's done before and that we do all the time. He is using the pronoun we collectively to simply refer to the church at large.

We, the church. I can say to you one day we will be resurrected. That doesn't mean that I know I'm going to die.

I'm just saying Christians will be resurrected. Or I could say one day when the Lord comes, we will ascend to him. That doesn't mean that I believe I'm going to be alive when the Lord comes.

I'm simply using we collectively to refer to the church, the body of Christ as a unit. Now, I think it's very, very important here that he gives us no time. He doesn't talk to us about time.

He's not saying Jesus will or will not come during his own lifetime. He gives us no time at all. Augustine said this, and I think it's really, really good.

He said the last day is hidden that every day may be regarded. The last day is hidden so that every day may be regarded. Do you know how people are? You know how you are.

At least I know something of how I am. If you thought, well, the Lord is coming, you know, June 30th, you know, two thousand and twenty eight can mark that on your calendar. And maybe you would change your plans, especially as that date drew near.

But that's not the type of devotion that the Lord wants. That's not the type of devotion that any lover wants, but a pure devotion that Lord, whether you come tonight or you come a thousand years from now. My devotion will be the same.

I do this not because I'm waiting for my saving day, I do this because I love the. They say that John Wesley was asked a question, what would you do differently if you knew what would you do today if you knew that the Lord was coming back this evening? You know what he said? Well, I would get up, I'd have breakfast and I'd go out, as I usually do in the morning and I would I would preach on the streets, I would come back, I would have lunch, of course, have a rest. Have my tea, go out again, evangelize the people, what he was saying is I'm not going to change anything because I am in the will of God.

Think about that. He was so careful each day to regard each day, are you like that? And I have to ask you, because I asked myself that, and if I'm going to suffer, well, you have to suffer, too, are you like that? And don't be overburdened or condemn yourself, you say, well, let's say that you're you're you're a doctor or a carpenter. And you say, well, I don't know if I'm like that because I just went to the office today or I just went to the house that we're working on, I just is that what the Lord has given you to do? If it's what he has given you to do, you have honored him.

You are to trust in his providence. If you're a college student, you're thinking about maybe one day you'll be a missionary or something, you think, well, I've got to quit college and run out and do something because he's going to come in 30 days. That's not what he wants.

You can glorify him just as much in the library studying for that math exam as you would witnessing to someone in Ethiopia. Why? Because at this moment, this is God's will for your life. So rejoice in it.

And don't divide your world up into secular sacred. Don't think that the policeman's job is less than the evangelist, if the policeman has been called to do what he's doing, then he's honoring God. Do you see that the housewife, the carpenter and the preacher and the student, so many people want to do something.

And. I don't know, extraordinary, and they don't realize that every moment of simple obedience to the task the Lord has given you is extraordinary and pleasing to him. Don't divide the mundane from the holy.

If you're a Christian, nothing is mundane. It's all holy if it's found in the center of his will. So you should go back tomorrow or tonight to your work.

Go back to your study, go back to all these things, even if the Lord was to come back and know I am in the center of God's will, if he's called me to be in this place, you see that now let's go on. I want to remind you with this text, the fact that Paul doesn't give us a day and doesn't give us a whole lot of details. I would like to remind you that this is what always happens whenever we come to a passage on eschatology, we come to a passage on the last things of the Second Coming.

He doesn't fill in the details and he doesn't give us a date, no matter how hard all those authors try to find one, because that's not the purpose of the teaching of the Second Coming. What is the purpose? Well, the purpose is comfort, hope. And motivation, that's the purpose.

And I dare say in every passage where the Second Coming is mentioned, that's what you'll find if you're a believer, comfort, hope, motivation, comfort in this passage. Look in verse 18. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

What was the purpose of him talking about the Second Coming? He'll tell us in chapter five. It wasn't to give them times and seasons. It was to give them comfort.

It gives me great comfort to know. That I will rise. That I will rise, that when the skeptic on his deathbed says the green leaf has turned brown, is brittle, is being crushed in the hand of death for the wind to blow it away, it is no more.

Or. This man who doesn't have half the IQ of that skeptic says somebody. Turn out the candle.

Because the sun's rising. I'm going home, my life begins, you see that. Now, hope.

Hope, not just comfort, hope, real hope, how can it be real hope? Because historically he rose, because historically he ascended. Hope, listen to this, John 14, 3, Jesus said, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am there, you may be also think it's interesting where I am, you may be that's that's the clincher right there, isn't it? He doesn't tell us necessarily where he just says where I am, that's where you'll be. And the mature believer goes, that's enough.

I don't need to hear anything else. If you just tell me throughout eternity where you are, I will be. I'm fine.

I'm fine. Then someone comes and tells you he died and came back to life and can describe heaven for you. You say, I don't want to hear it.

I don't need to hear it. Why? I'll tell you why. I'll be with him.

I'm going to be with him. And isn't it interesting that in verse 17, the last part of it, and so we shall always be with the Lord, there he goes again. What's what's the big deal about the second coming? It's not deliverance from pain.

It's not streets of gold. It's not gates of pearl. What is the big deal? We will see him.

And if you want that kind of that kind of passion for the face of Christ to be cultivated, the only way to do it is the mind of Christ and the renewing of your mind in the word of God. That's the only way. So hope.

And then there's another reason for teaching on the second coming and its motivation. Listen to this text, Matthew 24, beginning in 42. Therefore, beyond the alert.

Beyond the alert sense of alertness, urgency, urgency, he could come any day for you do not know which day your Lord is coming, but be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into for this reason. You also must be ready for the son of man is coming at an hour when you do not think he will. Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master will put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

Alertness. Alertness, yes, even studying in college. Realizing I'm doing this for him.

I'm doing this to fulfill his calling in me, that's why I'm doing this, I'm doing it for him. Changes everything. It really changes everything, if you can grasp that now.

He says in 14. Or 15, for this, we say to you by the word of the Lord that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep. Now, the phrase here will not proceed is actually a double negative, which in English you don't want to do that, but in Greek you do.

And it kind of can be translated this way. No, we will not proceed. No, we certainly will not proceed.

It's a double negative telling us what you're not going to proceed. Those of you who are alive are not going to proceed. Those who are dead, as though you were leaving them behind and going to receive some special benefit at the second coming that those dead in Christ will never see.

You will not proceed now. Let's go on, verse 16. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven, there is so much majesty in this.

Paul could have written this a number of ways. But he writes it this way, for the Lord himself will descend from heaven. Now, the word descend here tells us something very, very important.

First of all, skeptic again. He says, you know, this foolishness about the Bible, just primitive man with primitive thoughts, because when Jesus goes up, he ascends. And we all know that this is a round globe.

You don't ascend from it. And now he's going to descend. What kind of primitive language is this? The same type of primitive language that NASA scientists use when a rocket takes off and comes back.

They say, look at the rocket go up, does go up. They say, look at the rocket come down. It does go down.

And it's the same common language that Paul is using. But there's something about this that's even more important. When it says the Lord descends, it tells us something about where he is now.

When it says he will descend, it's telling us something about where he is now and where is he? He is seated at the right hand of the father. With the same glory that he had before the incarnation and even greater glory, because he's not just seated there as creator and he's not just seated there as sustainer and he's not just seated there as lord of lords and king of kings. He is seated there as redeemer, the one who shed his blood for his people.

Another thing that you need to understand about where the Lord is right now, because some people say, well, I don't understand that the passage in John says that that he's going back to receive the same glory he had before. So what's the difference? Here's the difference. The one that is now seated at the right hand of the father is not only God, the son, but the son of man.

He's not only fully God, he is also fully man. And he's not only fully man, but he's your brother. He is flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone, the one who has ascended is your brother.

You will ascend also as your brother has done and your brother. Reigns and your brother represents you. Now, this is not just pretty language, you need to understand this, this is very important theology here.

That one of Adam's stock is reigning over the universe now. I want to look at a passage in Isaiah six. I know it is a pre-incarnate vision of Christ, but at least it gives you some kind of idea of the glory of Christ seated on the throne right now.

He is seated. It says, well, let's just go to the passage, Isaiah six in the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne. Isn't it interesting? King Uzziah, in a way, was an ally of Isaiah.

He's dead. Isaiah's allies are gone, his hope, earthly hope. Would have been in a godly king, a king is gone.

So what did Isaiah need? He didn't need cliches, he didn't need words of wisdom from us. What did he need? He needed a vision of the one reigning over the universe, the one king who does not die, the king eternal. Immortal, invisible, the king of kings, the lord of lords.

Now, many of you say, well, well, you've gone back and you're looking in the Old Testament, a picture of God. You need to read well, John chapter 12, because John chapter 12 tells us that Isaiah saw Christ's glory when he saw this vision. And so where is our brother, where is our lord and savior? He is seated upon a throne, lofty and exalted with the train of his robe filling the temple.

What does that mean? The train of his robe filling everything at the train of his robe, his sovereignty, his lordship, his power touches everything. There is no place in heaven. There is no place on earth.

There's no place in hell where he is not absolute ruler. There is no thing over which he is not absolute ruler. He rules over all things.

And it says seraphim stood above him, each having six wings. Now, we have a problem with that, don't we? Seraphim standing above him. Well, first of all, in Hebrew, it could be saying something a little bit different.

It could be instead of him, it's it meaning that the seraphim are standing above his robe, but not above him. But even if we take the traditional translation, which I believe is the correct one, here's what you need to understand. Petty little kings, especially short ones.

They make sure that nobody's higher than them. Petty little kings that have inferiority complexes and insecurities, they can't have anybody taller than them, can they? Lord's not that way. Nothing shakes him up.

When you walk into that throne room, the seraphim could be 20000 miles above Christ's head, but there'd be no doubt in your mind who is Lord, because it's not Christ who's covering his face and his feet. It's these mighty seraphim that are covering their face and their feet. He is Lord.

And then it says this, it says the seraphim stood above him, each having six wings with two. He covered his face and with two, he covered his feet and with two he flew. What is all that about? I'm covering his face, cannot bear the glory of Christ covering his feet, recognizing your God.

And I am not I am clay, I am creature. And then wings flew in service. To their one and only master, this is the one who is seated right now on the throne, the one who died for you and the one who is coming again, that is where he's seated.

And then it says in verse three and one called out to another and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. When we hear this in verse three, that one called out to another, oftentimes we get the idea that here's the throne room here, these seraphim, and they're just crying out, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy.

That's really not the way it's going, but it's going something like this. One cries out, holy. And then you hear the other holy, then you hear the other holy, and then you hear the other holy.

It's just like when we we do this song, you know, sing hallelujah to the sing hallelujah to the Lord. You see, that's what they're doing. Holy, holy, holy, holy, holy.

If men will not cry out, holy, there will be those who do. Far superior to men, it is our privilege to cry out, holy. And now I've taken this brief departure from First Thessalonians that you see something of the majesty of the one who secures his promises, who guarantees his promises, the glory of the one who is coming to get you.

And the power of the one that with just one voice of command will raise you from the dead. Well, let's let's go on. I want us to let well, let's get back to First Thessalonians says in verse 16, for the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God and the dead and Christ will rise.

There's a few things that I want to point out. First of all, the announcement. Is immediate and instantaneous, do you understand that in one moment? The world is as it is, and in the next moment, everything has come to a halt.

There is a great shout. There is the voice of the archangel, there is the trumpet and it all occurs in a flash and there is the resurrection in a flash. But now the way that this is structured.

It seems that the descent is a little bit different, see, we always think that, well, basically what it is just in one second, everything's going to happen, Christ is going to be there, bam. But some scholars believe that the descent. Is gradual and visible, Hendrickson says this, it will not be an instantaneous change of location from heaven to earth, but will be characterized by a kind of majestic leisureliness.

That all of a sudden the shout. The voice, the trumpet, the dead transformed people. And then everyone looks up and coming in the clouds with majesty beyond anything anyone could ever describe, taking his time, gaining now his full vindication.

Every mouth is stopped. A T-shirt that's become quite popular is this. Jesus is coming again next time.

Well, this time we'll get him. What blasphemy. No one will be saying those kind of things when all of a sudden the sky is split and here he comes.

No hurry needed. Doesn't have to take his enemies by surprise, because of all his enemies got together, all of them in heaven and hell throughout eternity past and eternity forward. Every enemy got together and came against him at that moment.

It'd be like a little gnat beating its head against the world of granite. He's calm. Here he comes with all his banners unfurled.

Now, look what it says here in 16 for the Lord himself. It would be impossible for Paul to be more emphatic here, the Lord himself. Do you know if a king, the king of England or the president of the United States were to send his car for you, it would be a tremendous privilege, a great honor.

And what if even he went above that? He sent his car for you and he sent his finest nobles in the car to meet you. His closest associates, he sent them to meet you, that would be amazing. But it's quite another thing when the king himself comes, when the king himself comes.

Now, sometimes we look at this and we look back in the Old Testament and we say, yeah, but shouldn't he just, you know, wait for his bride, send someone to fetch her? I mean, that's what happened with Rebecca and Isaac. And even Esther, they someone else brought her before Xerxes. What's going on

here? It is this infinite.

Ravishing. Stronger than the ocean, love of Christ. Christ.

That brings him up from his throne to go get. His bride, I mean, we look at his bride right now, she looks bruised and torn. And burdened.

As a matter of fact, most would not find much beauty in her at all, but his love for her. Is so great. And he comes for her.

And I also want you, if you are a believer, I want you to understand something. You mark this down. You mark it down in your notebook somewhere.

I know that you're like me and you struggle. I know that at times you're ashamed. I know that because you can't be that much better than me.

You mark it down. And. Jesus did not die for you and Jesus is not coming again, just so that the first time you see him, you see a scowl on his face.

He's coming. For you and you look at yourself and go for me, I mean, in the presence of this, have you forgotten that this presence of this majestic king has the power to transform and he will transform you in the blink of an eye? He will transform you with such glory, with such beauty, with such spotless perfection that if you were to see yourself as you will be, if you could see that right now, you'd have a tendency to fall down on your face and want to worship what you will become. He's coming for a bride.

He will finish the work he started. He's not coming. For some humble little bruised and dirty thing that throughout all of heaven will just simply be reminded of its trespasses.

He's coming to make all things new, that is a glorious hope when you're as weak as I am, it's a great joy. He's coming to receive her. Let us be reciprocating, shouldn't we? You see, listen, a lot of times, you know, I'm pretty much known on the Internet as about being the meanest guy in the world.

And now the guy preaches righteousness. And listen to me, if you're a saint, if you're a Christian, if you've believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, if you are saved, if you're a convert of three seconds, listen to me. The greatest, greatest truth that you need to be taught is the unconditional love of God for you and what he's going to do with you.

You must grab this. Now, some people say, well, they grab that they'll just live in sin, no, they won't, not if they've been converted. Religious people will hear about the unconditional love of God.

They'll live in sin. But true converted people, the more you grasp, listen to me, those of you who are so serious about holiness, the more you grasp the unconditional love of God founded upon the bloodshed on Calvary, the more you grasp that it has the power to make you holy. It has the power, it's relish it, believe it, grab hold of it, fight for it.

You don't have to fight so that he unconditionally loves you. You have to fight to believe that he could unconditionally love you this way. It's beyond anything.

And if there is a great trust trespass, even in America where we talk about the church is this and the church is that and it's so bad and so dark, the greatest sin of the church is not believing God with regard to

his love for the church. Mark it down. His love for the church.

And that should cause you to be reciprocating. Listen, you get this little boy and he's he's he's ruined the house and he's destroyed dad's car and he's scared half to death and he's hidden away in a closet. It isn't the thundering of a father.

It isn't the threat of discipline. It's not the swishing of a switch that will coax him out of that closet. You want to know what it is? Love.

Love. I spent a great deal of my time trying to fight fire with fire, don't you do it doesn't work. It's the love of God.

The love of God, I would take everything I've ever done if I just had a greater ability to explain to true believers. And even to myself, how much God loves us. How much he loves us.

And that's what causes you to be reciprocating. On that day, if it could be put in slow motion and you hear the horn, you hear the shout, you hear the voice and you come forth like this. And if the devil was standing right beside you, who do you think you are lifting up your face to this glorious Lord? You disobeyed him.

Your heart's been nonchalant. You can't even pray one hour. How dare you lift up your face? I dare lift up my face because his arm lifts up my face.

He has reached down and lifted up my face. His love lifts up my face to look at the devil and say, you don't even know the half of it. You're not you're not omniscient.

You don't even know the half of my sin. And yet I stand here with boldness. Look to Calvary, look to his face, he loves me, he calls me goodbye.

You see that. Well, we're going to have to wait. On the other, I'm not going to go too long with you, I'm going to have mercy.

But oh, believe. I love to tell this to people, because in the back of our mind, I'll never forget the day it first popped into my head. Paul, did he do all this just so the first thing you see when he looks at you is a scowl on his face? Did he really do all this just for that? No.

No, he didn't. No, he did. Walk in the love of God, keep reminding yourself of the love of God, and when temptation comes, say, this cannot compete with the love of God.

Do you see that being encouraged, encourage others, encourage others? How many times do you walk up to someone and just say, you know, just want to remind you God loves you. God loves you. He loves you.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word. I pray, Lord, for your people that they would know that I would know your love or that we would just be.

Amazed. Stand in awe, full of joy, unspeakable and full of glory, would help your people mature in their understanding of your love, help them, Lord, help them, bless them, empower them this week, Lord, in Jesus name. I want to encourage you to please on Wednesday nights, if you can invite people to come on Wednesdays and Sundays.

You know, church is not a church unless people are being converted, pray for the universities, pray for the schools, pray for the workers there, pray for the neighborhoods, just bring people that they might hear the gospel. God bless you.

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