

Series: The Coming of the Lord; *Sermon:* **Encourage One Another**
delivered by Dr. Josh Moody, senior pastor, on March 21, 2021

Bible text explored: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore encourage one another with these words. [ESV]

Review and application:

Although Paul's preaching launched the church at Thessalonica, violent attacks cut his ministry there short (Acts 17:1-10, 13-15). So from Corinth, he wrote this letter to the Thessalonian believers (1 Thessalonians 3:4, 10) recognizing the afflictions they were suffering, and anxious to fill a "gap," —due to his abrupt departure— in their grasp of gospel basics.

1. What (*verse 13*) was the understanding gap he wanted to fill?
What change should result from becoming fully informed?
2. How do we know that grieving for believers already dead is legitimate?
(See Jesus' response to the death of Lazarus [*John 11:35*] and the solemn funeral conducted after the stoning death of Stephen [*Acts 8:2*]).
What makes death a valid offense to us, as well as to our Creator?
3. How (*verse 14*) does the resurrection of Jesus buttress the hope that we will one day bodily rise from the dead? (See *1 Corinthians 15:12-20*.)
4. Is the phrase "those who have fallen asleep" (*verse 15*) a gentle, acceptable euphemism for death, or is there a sense in which believers have already been delivered from judgment?
What might the "word from the Lord" be that assures us that believers already dead will not be lined up behind those of us still alive when he returns?
(See, for instance, *Luke 23:43; John 14:1-3*.)
How (*Mark 5:35, 39*) did Jesus affirm the sense in which those "fallen asleep" have already moved from death to life?
5. In *verses 16-17*, Paul draws on evocative biblical images to describe the ushering in of a new heaven and new earth for our eternal joy. How (*Philippians 1:20-25*) did Paul compare this life with the one to come?
6. What are some ways (*verse 18*) that we can encourage one another?
(See also *1 Thessalonians 5:11*.)
7. Becoming biblically informed with the aid of the Holy Spirit, pastor Moody suggested, would cause us to reject (*a.*) a utopian view that dreams of creating a heaven on earth, and (*b.*) a dystopian view that since our culture is disintegrating, we can only hunker down in survival mode. He coined the word "newtopian" for the alternative we could embrace. What is that? (See *Matthew 16:16-18*.)

8. The recognized grieving process stages are denial, anger, sorrow, and finally acceptance. How would adding an expectancy element help us grieve biblically?
9. What clues about encouraging others forward could we pick up on from how Jesus walked with the two despondent disciples on the road to Emmaus?
(See *Luke 24:13-16, 25-32*.)