

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



1 T H E S S A L O N I A N S

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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Waiting on Jesus

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 27, 1997

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:7–10

“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

1 THESSALONIANS 1:10

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Introduction

Thank you, Ron. Thank you, Pat. Thank you, Jesus, for setting our hearts in tune for the Word of God. Now, turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, and I want you to see three of the richest verses on Bible prophecy in all of the Bible. And, God has put three incredible thoughts in these short verses. Look, if you will, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 7: *“So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come”* (1 Thessalonians 1:7–10). Especially notice verse 10: *“to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come”* (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Ladies and gentlemen, we are on a collision course with destiny, and we cannot afford to be ignorant. The signs of Jesus's coming are so many that I have stopped looking for the signs; I'm listening for the shout. I believe that Jesus is at the door. One of the most blessed truths that I know—and it is a wonderful, blessed, and biblical truth—is this: that His coming is eminent. That means that He may come at any moment. We're not looking for some event in history; we are looking for Jesus Christ Himself. The last prayer in the Bible... Do you know what the last prayer in the Bible is? *"Even so, come Lord Jesus"* (Revelation 22:20). And, what that last prayer is ought to be our prayer today and every waking day. *"Even so, come Lord Jesus"* (Revelation 22:20). For that is exactly what Jesus taught us to pray: *"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10).

Now, there's a dark side to this verse. Look at it, if you will, in verse 10: *"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come"* (1 Thessalonians 1:10). *"The wrath to come"* (1 Thessalonians 1:10)—underscore that; look at it, and meditate on it. There is impending wrath. What is this wrath to come? It's the Great Tribulation. The Bible teaches that there are dark days coming on this earth. You say, "Pastor, we're already having tribulation." Friend, when the Great Tribulation comes, it will make the tribulation of today look like a Sunday School picnic. The Bible calls it *"the wrath to come"*—look at it; it's right there—*"the wrath to come"* (1 Thessalonians 1:10). This is not some scare tactic that I have conquered up. The Bible teaches clearly, plainly, solemnly, that there is a dark, devilish, devastating day that is coming. The Bible calls it *"the wrath to come"* (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

The prophet Daniel talked about it back in Daniel chapter 12 and verse 1, and he said in that verse, *"there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time"* (Daniel 12:1). There will be a time of trouble like there has never been. Jesus warned about it. Remember last week? We were in Matthew chapter 24, talking about the signs of the times. And, Jesus wrapped that up in verses 21 and 22, and He said, *"For then shall be great tribulation"*—now, this is the Word of Jesus; listen to it—*"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be"* (Matthew 24:21). There has never been any thing like it since the beginning, since the dawn of history, 'till the time that Jesus was speaking, nor any other time that would come after that time until the Great Tribulation comes. Daniel says, "There is nothing like it" (Daniel 12:1). The Apostle Paul said, "The wrath is coming" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Look, if you will, in the Book of the Revelation. Just leave 1 Thessalonians. Put your bookmark there, and turn to Revelation chapter 6. I think we will see a little more about this impending wrath. Look, if you will, in Revelation chapter 6. Let's begin in verse 15: it

tells about that time, and it says, *“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne”*—and, watch this—*“and from the wrath of the Lamb”*—can you imagine putting those words together—*“the wrath of the Lamb?”* The Lamb is Jesus. *“The wrath of the Lamb.”* And then, notice verse 17—*“For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:15–17). That’s what Paul is talking about in our text: this wrath.

And, notice the sixth chapter of Revelation. Let’s just stay here for just a moment, because this wrath to come is preceded by four horsemen. We call those “the four horses,” or “the four horsemen of the apocalypse.” And, if you’ll listen today, you can hear distant thunder. You can hear today the hoof beats of those four horsemen that are coming over the horizon. It is getting closer, and closer, and closer, and closer. Look at these four horsemen that precede this great day of wrath.

I. The White Horse: Dominion

Revelation chapter 6, verse 1 through 3: *“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see”*—now, look in verse 2—*“and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer”* (Revelation 6:1–2). Who is this rider on this white horse? He is the antichrist. Now, he is on a white horse. A white horse is a symbol of triumph. Rulers of that day, when they triumphed, would prance around on a white horse. The rider of this horse has a bow in his hand. That’s a weapon of war; it is a symbol of power. There is coming a conqueror with power. This verse says he has a crown upon his head—that is, he is a ruler. It’s the word *stephanos*. It’s a crown given to a king. And, the Bible says, “He goes forth to conquer” (Revelation 6:2). There is coming a malevolent, wicked, horrible, indescribably powerful world ruler, whom the Bible calls “the beast,” “the man of sin,” “the antichrist,” “the son of perdition,” “the wicked one.” And, he will be the last world dictator, riding upon his white horse with his bow in his hand, his crown on his head. The Bible says he will go forth to conquer (Revelation 6:2). Jesus predicted this. Jesus said, “I’ve come in My Father’s name; you wouldn’t receive Me” (John 5:43). But, Jesus said in John chapter 5, verse 43: *“if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive”* (John 5:43). Don’t think that it will not happen.

Now, he’s riding a white horse. Let me tell you something interesting. I have seen the proposed emblem for the United Nations. Do you know what it is? It is a white horse. And, the title of this clipping that I have—it says this: “The White Horse as a

Peace Messenger.” Do you know what the Bible says about the antichrist? *“By peace [he] shall destroy many”*—not through war, but through peace (Daniel 8:25). That is, he will come as the world’s messiah, offering peace. Let me read this article to you. It begins, “The White Horse as a Peace Messenger.” And, here’s the article; listen to this: “The dove, a symbol of peace and communion between nations, has competition now”—what’s the dove a symbol of? The Holy Spirit—“The dove, a symbol of peace and communion between nations, has competition now. The design of the white horse was donated for the purpose of a peaceful uniting of the five continents, symbolized through strength to assure freedom and unity”—do you see it? Strength—that’s the bow in the hand. And then, it goes on to say—“At the head of the horse, the United Nations emblem is to be seen with five differently colored ribbons, symbolizing the five continents. World organizations recognize five continents: Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australia.” They’ve already got the logo for the antichrist, and all the nations of the world, all of the five continents, strength, unity, peace, the rider of the white horse. You see it happening; it’s happening right before our eyes.

II. The Red Horse: Destruction

And, who’s the next rider? Look, if you will, in verse 4: *“And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword”* (Revelation 6:4). The first horse—the white horse—that’s dominion. The red horse—that is destruction. Red is the power of blood. When this devil-inspired leader, the antichrist, goes forth to conquer, and when he gets the idea of world conquest in his evil brain, what is going to follow? First, sin; then, war; then, havoc; and then, destruction. Didn’t Jesus warn us in our message last week, as we studied His words, that there would be “wars and rumours of wars” (Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7)? It will not get better; it will get worse.

A general of yesteryear, General Omar Bradley, said these words: “We know more about killing than living. This is the 20th Century’s claim to progress: knowledge of science outstrips capacity for control. We have too many men of science and too few men of God. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience, a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We have enough nuclear weapons stockpiled in the world today to kill everybody on earth 150 times.” How many times can you die?

But, war is coming. And, the spirit of antichrist will inflame men’s hearts with hatred, and cause brother to rise up against brother, child to rise up against parent, nation to rise against nation. They did not want the Prince of peace, and now, there will be unrestrained war. And, dripping swords will be drenched with blood, and the streets will

be filled with the decaying, bloated bodies of those who have died. There will be the groans of the living. When Jesus Christ spoke about this in Matthew 24, He said, “You better pray it doesn’t come on the Sabbath day, because the Orthodox Jews will not flee Jerusalem on the Sabbath day (Matthew 24:20). And, He said, “*Woe unto them that are with child*” (Matthew 24:19)—these people who are carrying babies in their womb, or a little suckling child, children.

III. The Black Horse: Deprivation

Then, what follows? First, the white horse (dominion). Secondly, the red horse, (destruction). Thirdly, the black horse (deprivation). Look, if you will, in verses 5 and 6: “*And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he who sat upon him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny*” (Revelation 6:5–6). A measure of wheat—that’s one meal. A penny—a denarius—that’s a day’s labor. It would be the same as paying 100 dollars or more for a loaf of bread and three measures of barley for a penny. Barley is hardly fit to eat. We spoke last week about what the Lord Jesus had to say about famines coming. One half of the world already goes to bed hungry. But, when you take the able-bodied men of this world and put them to war, who’s going to till the fields? How are you going to get food to the hungry? And, there will come massive starvation.

When Titus, the Roman general, surrounded Jerusalem in 70 A.D., one of the things he did was to cut the city off from food. The people could not go out into the fields, where there was ripening grain. The people became maniacal, starved, half crazed. And, historians tell us that women killed, and cooked, and ate their own babies. Cannibalism, I believe, will be seen again in the Great Tribulation.

IV. The Pale Horse: Death

Dominion, destruction, deprivation, and, last of all, decimation and death. Look at the next horse—verses 7 and 8: “*And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse*”—the word pale, there, is the word *cloros*. It’s the word we get chlorine from. It means “a ghastly green—putrid; the color of decaying, deadly flesh”—“*a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth*”—more than a billion people will die—“*to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth*” (Revelation 6:7–8). Stay tuned. I’m going to talk about the beasts of the earth, in just a moment.

Do you see the chain reaction? First of all, the antichrist; then, war, destruction; then, famine, deprivation; and then, death. It’s a chain reaction. Sin causes hatred.

Hatred causes war and bloodshed. War causes famine. Famine produces death. But listen, death is not all. Look at this verse; look at it, in verse 8: *“and his name that sat on him was Death”*—now, watch—*“and Hell followed with him”* (Revelation 6:8). Hell followed with him. Don’t get the idea that death will end it all. As a matter of fact, the Bible teaches, in these days, men will seek death, and death will flee from them (Revelation 9:6). But, even if they do die, they cannot crawl up in the grave, and pull the dirt over their face, and hide from God, because death gets the body, and Hell gets the soul. It is death and Hell.

I say, if you listen, if you read the newspapers, if you watch, you can hear the hoof beats. You can hear the distant thunder. These four horsemen are ready to ride. And, when they ride... Go back again, now, to verse 17 of this chapter: *“For the great day of his wrath is come”* (Revelation 6:17). That’s the reason I said Paul’s scripture was a great scripture: because it says that we are waiting for Jesus, who has delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10). He didn’t say “the wrath that might come.” He said, “It’s coming” (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

V. The Beasts of the Earth

Now, we said that this last horse—this pale horse—reminds us of the beasts of the earth. Look, if you will, at the last phrase in verse 8. With that in mind, just fast-forward to Revelation chapter 9, for a moment. What are these beasts of the Earth? Some people say they may be rats, or other creatures like that. I believe he is using symbolic language. The antichrist is a beast, and he has a number of beasts that will follow him. They will be demon spirits. Look, if you will, in Revelation chapter 9 and verse 1: *“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth”*—who is that star? His name is Satan. He’s Hell’s hero—*“And I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit”*—the bottomless pit is the penitentiary for the most malevolent, for the most wicked, evil, demon spirits—so vile, so wicked, that God has incarcerated them in a bottomless pit. But now, Satan is handed the keys. And, notice what happens in verse 2—*“And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth”* (Revelation 9:1–3). These are the beasts I believe he’s talking about. You see, the fallen star is Lucifer himself, and he is going to loose demon spirits during the Great Tribulation upon the earth. They come out of the abyss, the penitentiary, of evil spirits.

A. Locusts

They are described as locusts. If you had lived in the Middle East, you would know what an invasion of locusts would do. They would come in such swarms that they would fill

the air. They would be choking by their presence, there would be so many of them. They would blot out the sun. You could not even see, there would be so many of them. *“The sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit”* (Revelation 9:2). A locust in the Middle East would devour everything in sight. They would eat the leaves. They would eat the branches. They would strip the bark from the trees and leave nothing but devastation. Only, these locusts will not feed on green things; they will feed and feast on men. Look, if you will, in verse 4: *“And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads”*—can you imagine what he’s describing here? Demon spirits, insatiable in their appetite to feed and feast on men, devouring all with demonic power.

B. **Scorpions**

And, look how they’re described in verses 5 and 6—like scorpions, also—*“And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man”* (Revelation 9:4–5). Have you ever been bitten by a scorpion? I have. Can you imagine not one scorpion, but the air filled with scorpions? The torment! That’s the reason why I said death would be a welcome release. Look in verse 6: *“And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them”* (Revelation 9:6).

C. **Horses**

“Well,” you say, “I’ll get away from these demon spirits.” No, you won’t. Look in verse 7: *“And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses”*—what are the beasts, now? First, locusts; now, scorpions; now, horses—*“prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold”* (Revelation 9:7). A horse can outrun a man. These are coming with rapid progress, irresistibility. And, you will not be able to withstand them, because they are in control. Satan, now, has put the crown upon his demons, and they are following Satan.

D. **Men**

“Well,” you say, “I’ll outsmart them,” because it says, *“Their faces were as the faces of men”* (Revelation 9:7). It speaks of the face of a man, which speaks of human wisdom, human intelligence. And, of course, today, we are worshiping human wisdom and human intelligence—“Thus sayeth the mind of man,” rather than, “Thus sayeth the Word of God.” I get so put out by some of these so-called Bible scholars today, who are trying to take the Bible apart and judge the Bible. They were never meant to judge the Bible; the Bible was meant to judge them. I’d rather listen to a fool preach the Bible than watch what some pseudo-intellectual fool has to say about the Bible.

E. Women

And, listen. You say, “Well, they won’t fool me.” Oh, yes, they will. They’re very seductive. Notice in verse 8: *“And they had hair as in the hair of women”*—a face like a man (intelligent); but hair like the hair of women. What does that speak of? Exactly what the Apostle Paul spoke of, when he said, *“seducing spirits”* (1 Timothy 4:1). They will be seductive, alluring. Satan comes either as an angel of light or as a roaring lion. Hair like women.

F. Lions

But, wait a minute. Continue to read; continue to read—*“Teeth as the teeth of lions”* (Revelation 9:8). The beasts of the Earth that come out of the bottomless pit: a face like a man (intelligence); hair like a woman (seductive); teeth like a lion (to bite, and shred, and rip, and tear, and devour). You don’t want to be here during the Great Tribulation.

Now, you listen to me: you do not want to be here. You say, “Well, Pastor, that is symbolic language.” Well, what is the symbol talking about? Why has God taken these figures of speech to give us this language to describe to us what is happening upon this earth? To give us this language to describe to us what is happening upon this earth. You say, “Well, we will destroy them.” No, you will not. Look in verse 9 of this same chapter: *“And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron”*—what does that speak of? They are invincible. You will not be able to destroy them. Sinful men will do them no good to fight back. Don’t you underestimate the power of Satan without the power of Jesus Christ to overcome him. He has a breastplate like iron. Look again in verse 9. You’re not going to be able to outwit or outrun him. The Bible says—*“and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle”* (Revelation 9:9). Now, wings, chariots, horses, lions, scorpions, locusts, the beasts of the earth—you’ll not outwit them; you’ll not outrun them.

Look, if you will, in verse 10, if you think that Satan has taken over. He hasn’t taken over, however. And, the Bible says, *“And their power was to hurt men five months”* (Revelation 9:10). That is, God has put brackets around everything that Satan does. Five months is the life span of a locust. What does that mean? It means that our God is still in control.

Now, go back to our text. And, we haven’t been there for a long time, so go back to 1 Thessalonians, if you will. I just wanted to take that little bypath to help you understand some of the things that the Apostle Paul is saying, when he is saying here that Jesus has delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Now, I think this verse will make more sense to you in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 10: that we’re *“to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus”*—now, listen to this—*“which delivered us from the wrath to come”* (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Say, “Amen!” Say, “Hallelujah!” Listen, folks, I’m telling you, you’d better thank God for Jesus. The

wrath is coming. No, *if so, maybe so—it is coming*. And, only Jesus can deliver you from the wrath to come.

Now, we're waiting for Jesus. We're not waiting for the antichrist. Some people think the Church is going to go through the Great Tribulation. That isn't what this says. It says, *"[Jesus] delivered us from the wrath to come"* (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Go to chapter 5, and look, if you will, at verses 1 through 3: *"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape"*—but, notice verse 4—*"But ye, brethren"*—ye, brethren—"are not in darkness, that they day shall overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:1–4). And then, look, if you will, in verses 9 through 11 of this same chapter: *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath"*—the great day of His wrath is come, but that's not for us—*"God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation"*—that means *deliverance*—*"by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as you do"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9–11). You see, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is a comfort. If I don't believe that Jesus can come at any moment, if I'm looking for the Great Tribulation, if I'm waiting for the antichrist rather than looking from the true Christ, then rather than looking up, I'm looking around. There's no comfort to say, "I'm going into the Great Tribulation."

But, God is not going to pour out His wrath upon His own dear children. Before God destroyed Lot, before God destroyed Sodom with fire and brimstone, what did He do? He took Lot out. The angel said, "I can't do anything until you've gotten out of here" (Genesis 19:15). Before God sent the flood to destroy the world in Noah's day, what did He do? He put Noah in the ark before the flood came. God had not appointed us to wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9). God never pours out His wrath upon His children. He chastises His children. His wrath is for the unsaved—those who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ. And, one of these days, the great day of His wrath is going to come. Oh, there are so many scriptures that teach this. Revelation 3, verse 10: *"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth"* (Revelation 3:10). Jesus is coming at any moment.

Now folks, I took too long with the first part of this message. So, let me just give you the bottom line. All right, look again, if you will, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. What should we be doing while we're waiting for Jesus? *"So that ye were ensamples to all that believe"* (1 Thessalonians 1:7). Do you believe? Then, these people were an example to you. Verse 8: *"For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in*

Macedonia and in Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not speak anything—Paul said, “When I got there to preach, you had already been there. You were sounding out the Word of God”—“*For they themselves*”—that is, your converts—“*shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the true the living and true God; And to wait for his Son form heaven*” (1 Thessalonians 1:8–10).

Now folks, while you are waiting, you need to be serving. Why have I linked prophecy with one step higher? Because that is what it is all about. If we believe that Jesus is coming—and we do—we need to turn from idols. You say, “Well, I don’t worship idols.” Any thing you love more, serve more, trust more, or fear more than Almighty God is an idol. To turn to God from idols to serve the living God. “Waiting for Jesus”—we sing it. We’ll work ’till Jesus comes, and then we’ll be gathered home. He’s coming; and when He comes, we’re going up higher. Until He comes, we need to be moving up higher—one step higher.

Conclusion

Now listen, folks: the Bible says here they were waiting for Jesus (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Not only were they expecting Him; they were anticipating Him.

A man was a stationmaster. He was in the railroad station waiting for the train to come. A young lady was there; she was waiting for the same train. The young lady had her fiancé on that train; she was waiting to meet him and greet him. And, they were to be married. What was the difference between the stationmaster and the young lady? The stationmaster knew the train was coming. He had his charts. The young lady could hardly wait for it to get there—that’s it.

I can hardly wait! “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*” (Revelation 22:20). We’re to be waiting—waiting—for His Son from Heaven, looking, learning, longing, laboring ’till Jesus comes and we’ll be gathered home. Thank God for Jesus, who has delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Bow your heads in prayer.

Waiting on Jesus

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 27, 1997

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:8–10

“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

1 THESSALONIANS 1:10

Outline

Introduction

I. An Impending Wrath

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Introduction

The title of the message today: “Waiting on Jesus.” Would you take your Bibles, and would you turn, please, to 1 Thessalonians, the first chapter—1 Thessalonians, the first chapter? Now, before I read our scripture, let me say that there’s nothing more exciting in my heart and mind than this fact: that Jesus Christ may come at any moment. And, we are on, right now, a collision course with destiny. And, those who are children of God cannot afford to be ignorant; we need to learn. There are so many signs of the coming of our Lord I’ve stopped looking for the signs; I have begun to listen for the shout of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now listen, Christ may come at any moment. The last prayer of the Bible is...you know what it is? *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus”* (Revelation 22:20)—come. And, that ought to be the refrain and the prayer of our hearts on this Lord’s Day: *“Even*

so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

Now, begin in verse 8, if you will: *“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing”*—Paul was saying to these Christians in Thessalonica, “When I got there to preach, you’d already been there, and you’d already been preaching the Lord Jesus.” And, he says, “Your converts showed that.” Notice in verse 9—*“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God”*—Paul said, “We came to you; we preached the gospel to you. You turned to the living and the true God; you no longer served idols. Then, you went out, and you began to win other people to Jesus.” That’s the way it ought to be. But now, here’s the key verse; look in verse 10—*“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come”* (1 Thessalonians 1:8–10). The title of the message: “Waiting for Jesus.” Paul said, “These saints at Thessalonica were waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ to come from Heaven; and we all say, ‘*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*’ (Revelation 22:20)” There are three things I want to lay on your heart out of this 10th verse (an incredibly rich verse).

I. An Impending Wrath

The very first thing I want you to see is a very dark part of this verse. Notice what it says here: *“the wrath to come”* (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Do you see that? Underscore it: *“the wrath to come”* (1 Thessalonians 1:10). There are dark days coming. Now, he didn’t say “the wrath that *might* come”; he says “the wrath *to* come” (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Ladies and gentlemen, what he is talking about, here, is the Great Tribulation. The Bible, over and over again, tells us of a Great Tribulation that is going to come—dark, terrible, horrible days. You say, “Pastor, we already know tribulation.” The tribulation that is called “the Great Tribulation” will make what is going on in the world seem like a Sunday School picnic. It is called *“the day of [God’s] wrath”* (Job 21:30). It will be a day of Hell on Earth. It will be a day when everything is chaotic, when the antichrist will have his way, and Satan will rule here on this earth. The Bible prophesies this time.

You might want to put in your Bible “Daniel chapter 12 and verse 1.” And, in that passage, Daniel says, *“And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time”* (Daniel 12:1). Now, that’s a big statement. Daniel said, “Ever since there’s been civilization, there will never be a time of trouble like this time of trouble.” And, the Lord Jesus Christ—who was no calamity hour, who was impeccable truth, omniscient wisdom—the Lord Jesus Christ said in Matthew chapter 24, verses 21 and 22: *“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be”*—now, think about that:

great tribulation. Jesus said, “There’s never been any thing like it; there never will be another thing like it.” Daniel said, “All of history has never known any thing like this time.” Jesus went on to say that it will be so terrible, so horrible. Jesus said—*“except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved”* (Matthew 24:21–22). If God, in mercy, did not cut it off, everybody on earth would be decimated.

Now, just put your bookmark there in 1 Thessalonians, and turn over, if you will, to Revelation chapter 6 for a moment, because Revelation chapter 6 speaks, I believe, as clearly as any chapter in the Bible, about this day that the Bible calls “the wrath of God” or “the wrath to come.” Look, if you will, in verse 17—Revelation chapter 6, verse 17: *“For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:17). God gave the Apostle John a foreshadowing, God gave him a preview, of what is to come, and he wrote it down in the Book of the Revelation, and described it, and said, “Here’s what it is; here is the great day of His wrath.” Now, remember what the Apostle Paul said? “We are waiting for Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Remember what Daniel said? “There’s never a time like it since there was a nation” (Daniel 12:1). Remember what the Lord Jesus Christ said? “Never ever, ever has there been a time like this day of wrath” (Matthew 24:21). Remember what the Apostle John says? *“The great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:17).

Well, what precedes this verse? Go back to chapter 6 and verse 1. We have John’s vision of the four horsemen of the apocalypse. The Apostle John saw four horsemen riding upon four different colored horses, and these four horses represent the judgment that is to come upon the earth. And, if you will put the ear to the ground, you can hear the distant hoof beats; you can hear the thunder of these horses, because, folks, they are right over the horizon.

A. The White Horse: Dominion

This is what the Great Tribulation is going to be like. Notice, if you will, chapter 6, verses 1 through 3: *“And...when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer”* (Revelation 6:1–2). Now, if you know anything about Biblical symbolism, you know that a white horse speaks of victory. As a matter of fact, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes in the last days, He is coming upon a white horse. The Bible describes that, in Revelation chapter 19. But, this is a picture—not of Christ; this is a picture of antichrist. This is a picture of the great day of God’s wrath. Here’s one coming who is imitating, mimicking, the Lord Jesus, who will come from Heaven on a white horse with all the saints following Him (Revelation 19:11). This one has a bow in his hand. A bow is a weapon of war; it symbolizes his strength and power.

He has a crown upon his head; that means he goes forth conquering, and to conquer (Revelation 6:2). This antichrist—that the Bible also calls “the beast,” “the man of sin,” “the son of perdition,” “the wicked one”—he is going to come as a worldwide leader. John has already told us, as we studied a few Sundays ago, that all of the earth will follow him. He will come forth conquering, and to conquer (Revelation 6:2).

Now folks, the white horse that this man will ride upon is being formed, and that is the one-world government. I have an article that I clipped. Here’s the title of the article: “The White Horse as a Peace Messenger”—“The White Horse as a Peace Messenger.” And, here’s what the article says: “The dove, symbol of peace and communion between nations, has competition now”—now, what is the dove a symbol of? The Holy Spirit—“The dove, symbol of peace and communion between nations, has competition now. The design of the white horse was donated for the purpose of peaceful uniting of the five continents, symbolized through strength, to assure freedom and unity. At the head of the horse the United Nations emblem is to be seen, with five differently colored ribbons symbolizing the five continents. World organizations recognize five continents: Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australia.” They’ve already got the logo for the antichrist. It’s a white horse, and what they’re saying is this: that he will unite all of the continents of the earth. He will go forth with strength, with dominion—come forth as a regal leader. Can you imagine him as he comes upon this white horse? This wicked servant of Satan will be the last world ruler. That’s the white horse.

We see a world government beginning to form. We see globalism as never before. The Internet is making us more and more a global community. We hear now that it takes a village to raise a child—that we hear so much about “the global village,” “globalism,” “one-world-ism,” and we have come to a generation that worships Mother Earth rather than Father God. So now, we have Earth Day. And, we’re told our children cannot celebrate Easter, but we can celebrate Earth Day.

B. The Red Horse: Destruction

Well now, first of all, there comes the white horse; and then, there comes, after the white horse, the red horse. The white horse is dominion, but look at the red horse in verse 4 of this same chapter: “*And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword*” (Revelation 6:4), because after the antichrist comes, this virtual world dictator, he will come with his corrupted power. We’ve often heard that power corrupts, and total power totally corrupts. And, this man will be inflamed with hatred and sin. He will be a vile man. And, war will break out as hatred inflames men’s hearts, and war will come out of the evil brain of this wild, maniacal leader. Red is the color of blood. Jesus warned, in our study last week, that there would be “*wars and rumours of wars*” (Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7).

A general of yesteryear, Omar Bradley, said this: he said, “We know more about war than about peace, more about killing than about living. This is the 20th Century’s claim to progress: knowledge of science outstrips capacity for control. We have too many men of science, too few men of God. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience, a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. And, we continue to stockpile weapons. They tell us, now, that we have enough atomic war power, detonating power upon the earth, to kill every person on the globe 150 times—every person.”

Well, the Bible speaks of this coming war, because when the antichrist rises forth, the spirit of hatred is going to come; and then, brother will kill brother, child will fight against parent, nation against nation. We didn’t want the Prince of Peace, so He will stand aside. And, the streets will be filled with dead bodies, bloated decaying carcasses, during this time. Jesus warned—He said, “You pray that that time doesn’t come on the Sabbath” (Matthew 24:20). If it came on the Sabbath, if it began on the Sabbath, when this great persecution of the Jews begins, many orthodox Jews would not flee on the Sabbath. Jesus said, *“Woe unto those that are pregnant with babies and have nursing babies during that time”* (Matthew 24:19)—great tribulation.

C. The Black Horse: Deprivation

First of all, dominion; and then, after dominion, there comes this destruction, this war; and after this destruction, there comes deprivation. Look, if you will, in verses 5 and 6: *“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand”—*that is, “old-fashioned scales”—*“And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny”—*a measure of wheat, friend, is hardly a meal. A penny is a day’s labor. That would be like paying 100 dollars for a loaf of bread—*“A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine”* (Revelation 6:5–6). Here comes this rider, now, upon this white horse—excuse me, comes upon this black horse—and this is famine, deprivation, because as the antichrist comes with his power and hatred, there comes war; and as there comes war, people are no longer able to till the fields and to harvest the crops, and starvation will stalk the world. As we spoke last week, already half of the people in the world go to bed hungry, but great, great famine is coming. The scales in the hand of this rider represent that food is going to be carefully rationed out, and men will work just for subsistence. And, many people will starve when the black horse of deprivation rides forth.

First, the white horse; then, the red horse; and then, the black horse is going to come. When Titus, the Roman general, in 70 A.D., came against Jerusalem and surrounded Jerusalem, he cut the city off from the ripening grain in the fields. And, they

(the people) could not go out or come in. And, he just decided to starve the Jewish people out in 70 A.D., and it was a terrible thing. The historians tell us that mothers killed, and cooked, and ate their own children. It was such a terrible time there in that great tribulation under Titus, which was only a fore-gleam of the Great Tribulation that is to come.

D. The Pale Horse: Death

First, there comes the white horse—dominion; then, there comes the red horse of destruction; and then, there comes the black horse of famine; and then, last of all, there comes that pale horse. Look, if you will, here, again, in chapter 6 and verse 8: *“And I looked, and behold a pale horse”*—and, the word for *pale* is the Greek word *chloros*; it’s the word we get *chlorine* from. It means “a ghastly green.” It speaks of putrefaction and death—*“and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth”*—25% of the world’s population, more than a billion, will die—*“over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth”* (Revelation 6:8).

Now, notice the progression: first of all, there comes this antichrist; and after the antichrist, there comes the sword; and after the sword, there comes hunger; and after hunger, there comes death; and after death, there comes Hell. Notice: *“Death, and Hell followed with him”* (Revelation 6:8). This time is going to be so horrible, so terrible, that men will want to die. And, what we call “death” would be a welcome release, but it will not be, because after death comes the Judgment and Hell. Death will get the body; Hell will get the soul. What a horrible, terrible time!

E. The Beasts of the Earth

But, notice the last phrase here: he says they’re going to be killed *“with hunger, and with death”*—now, notice this—*“and with the beasts of the earth”*—*“the beasts of the earth”* (Revelation 6:8). What is he talking about? Is he talking about lions or tigers? Is he talking about rhinoceros, or is he talking about rats? No, no, no, this is highly symbolic language. What are these beasts that are going to destroy men? Well, go to Revelation chapter 9, and look with me for just a moment: *“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth”*—a star, a fallen star. Now, we call our heroes today “stars.” Hell has a hero, a fallen star; this is Lucifer, who fell from Heaven—*“I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him”*—it’s not a thing; it’s a person—*“and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit”* (Revelation 9:1). This is the abyss. What is the abyss? It is the penitentiary of the most malevolent, wicked, fierce, destructive demon spirits, angels that fell when Satan fell, that were so vile, so wicked that God has locked them up in the abyss. But now, when Hell has a holiday, Satan is given a key to

the bottomless pit. And, you're going to find out that out of that pit will come the beasts of the Earth that we were reading about, just a little before this.

1. Locusts

Notice in verses 2 and 3: *"And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit"*—and the Bible says—*"And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth"* (Revelation 9:2–3). And so, as this sulfurous smoke comes out of that pit, there will come locusts—thousands, and thousands, and thousands, and thousands of them will come out of that pit.

The Bible teaches there is an innumerable number of angels. One-third of the angels fell. God alone knows how many demon spirits there are incarcerated in that pit, but they tell us, in the Middle East, that when the locusts would come, in biblical times, there would be a disaster of epic proportions when these locusts would come. And, you could hear the rustle of their wings, like a mighty airplane would sound today. And, they would come with such clouds that they would blot out the sun; it would be dark. There would be a choking smoke and dust that would fill the air, as these locusts would come, wave upon wave and rank upon rank; and, they would attack the green things. They would eat every blade of grass; they would eat the leaves off the trees. They would even eat the bark of the trees. But, not these locusts—these locusts feed on human flesh. Look in verse 4: *"And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads"*—these locusts, these demon spirits, these beasts of the Earth are going to feed upon human flesh.

2. Scorpions

Notice in verse 5—*"And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man"*—have you ever been stung by a scorpion? I have. I think I can understand this passage of Scripture. But, not one scorpion—the air is filled with them! Now, like a locust to devour. Now, like a scorpion to torment. No wonder verse 6 is there—*"And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them"* (Revelation 9:4–6).

3. Horses

Now, notice verse 7: *"And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle"*—you think, "Well, I will escape." Oh no, you won't. You've not outrun a horse, and you cannot outrun these. We're talking about the beasts of the Earth. First, locusts; now, scorpions; now—*"horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold"*—this is when Satan is in control. Now, Satan has been

enshrined. Now, Satan is being worshiped. They're wearing crowns like gold. They will have dominion.

4. Men

You say, "Well, I'll outsmart them." Oh no, you won't. Notice, in the last part of verse 7—*"and their faces were as the faces of men"* (Revelation 9:7). In Bible typology and symbolism, this speaks of intelligence. You see, Satan is stupidly brilliant. He is going to be the tactician who is going to lead and guide these, and they will have knowledge, represented by the faces of men. Men today worship at the shrine of their computers and knowledge; but friend, there's one who is smarter than they are.

5. Women

Now, notice, also, they had the hair of women (Revelation 9:8). You say, "Well, I would not believe—I would not follow—Satan." Oh, they have hair like women; that speaks of seductiveness. You know, the Bible speaks of *"seducing spirits, and doctrines of [demons]"* (1 Timothy 4:1), and this speaks of the alluring seductiveness of these demonic forces.

6. Lions

But, you have to look beyond the hair and the mascara, because their teeth were the teeth of lions—to bite, and shred, and tear, and crush, and kill (Revelation 9:8).

Hair like women; faces like men; teeth like lions; out of the bottomless pit—so many, like an invasion of locusts. "Well," you say, "I will fight back. I will destroy them." No, you will not. They have *"breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron"*—they will be impervious. Your puny strength will mean nothing against these demon spirits. Apart from the power of the Lamb of God, all of us are vulnerable to Satan. They have breastplates of iron—*"and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle"*—you say, "I will escape." Oh no, you won't; oh no, you won't. You will be run down by these chariots of Hell—*"And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails"*—the beasts of the earth. You can be grateful for the last part of verse 10—*"and their power was to hurt men five months"*—that is, it's limited (Revelation 9:9–10). Do you remember what Jesus said? *"Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved"* (Matthew 24:22). I mean, the lifespan of a locust is five months, and what God is saying here is that He still is in control. Satan is powerful, but he's not all-powerful. He is mighty, but he's not almighty. He is knowledgeable, but he is not omniscient. And, he is limited.

Now, they have a leader that goes before them. Look in verse 11: *"And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek name hath his name Apollyon"* (Revelation 9:11). The devil himself is the commander in chief of Hell's armies. The bottomless pit is

unleashed; all Hell breaks loose. No wonder this chapter ends—chapter 6 ends—with this statement: *“For the great day of his wrath is come; and who”—“who”—“shall be able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:17).

Now folks, you listen to your pastor today. Daniel said there’s coming a time of trouble; there’s never been any thing like it (Daniel 12:1). Jesus said it is *“great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, nor, nor ever shall be”* (Matthew 24:21). The Apostle John said when the great day of His wrath comes, nobody will be able to stand (Revelation 6:17). The Apostle Paul said in our text that we began with, *“We’re waiting for Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come”* (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Amen? You’d better be grateful for that. There is impending wrath.

II. An Expectant Wait

Now, very quickly, I want you to see something else. Go back to our text, if you will. There is an expectant wait. Look again; go back to 1 Thessalonians, and the Bible says here in verse 10 that we’re to be waiting *“for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come”* (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

There are some people who teach that the Church is going through the Great Tribulation. I don’t believe that, and I’ll tell you why I don’t believe that: Jesus said, *“In this world, you’ll have tribulation”* (John 16:33), but He wasn’t talking about the Great Tribulation, because in the Great Tribulation, it is God’s wrath that is being poured out. Listen, God never pours out His wrath upon His own dear children. Go to the fifth chapter of 1 Thessalonians; look, if you will, in verses 1 through 3: *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape”*—but notice in verse 4—*“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief”* (1 Thessalonians 5:1–4). Go down to verse 9: *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Hallelujah! We’re not waiting for the antichrist; we’re waiting for the Christ. I mean, if you don’t believe that Jesus could come at any moment, if you believe the Church must go through the Great Tribulation, then stop looking up and start looking around. Friend, death, then, would be better than to go through the Great Tribulation and then go on to Heaven. And, it would be death that would be the blessed hope, not the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us in Revelation chapter 3, verse 10, to the church there: *“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee*

from the hour of temptation—“the hour of testing”—“*which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth*” (Revelation 3:10). Our Lord is going to take us out! I’m waiting for the Rapture. I’m waiting for Jesus to come.

Now, if we have to go through the Great Tribulation, His coming will be no surprise. When the Great Tribulation comes, the antichrist comes, we start counting the days, but listen to these scriptures that tell us that Jesus is coming at any moment. Matthew 24, verse 36: “*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only*” (Matthew 24:36). Matthew 24, verse 38: “*For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark*” (Matthew 24:38). Now, it doesn’t sound like the Great Tribulation to me; it sounds like a big party: marrying, eating, drinking, giving in marriage. Suddenly, the flood came; suddenly, Jesus is going to come. Matthew 24, verse 42: “*Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come*” (Matthew 24:42). Matthew 24, verse 44: “*Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh*” (Matthew 24:44). Mark 13, verses 32 through 36: “*But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father*”—Jesus Christ, in His humanity upon this Earth, did not know the time of the Second Coming. So, if you come around here and tell me that you know the time, you don’t. It’s coming at any moment—“*Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is*” (Mark 13:32–33). And, he says, again, “Be watching” (Mark 13:35). Verse 36: “*Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping*” (Mark 13:36). Now, we need to stop looking for signs and start looking up, and listening, and waiting for Jesus to come.

III. An Exemplary Work

Now, here’s the final thing. I wish I had more time. We’ve talked about impending wrath. We’ve talked about an expectant wait. We are waiting for Jesus—we’re waiting for Jesus. He’s going to come as surely as He went away. The third thing I want you to notice is the exemplary work. Notice, if you will, verse 7: “*So that ye were ensamples to all that believe*” (1 Thessalonians 1:7). Now, what we do... There is the wrath. There is the wait. There’s also the work.

What is the example that they’ve set for us? Look in verse 9: “*For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God; And to wait for his Son*” (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10). Now, how do you wait for Jesus? By the study of prophecy? That’s not enough. By getting saved? Well, that’s wonderful, but that’s not the way to wait. The Bible says we’re to occupy ’till He comes (Luke 19:13). We are to serve the living and the true God, and how do you serve the living and the true God? You turn from idols. You say, “Well,

Pastor, I don't have any idols." An idol is any thing you love more, trust more, fear more, or serve more than God. It's an idol. America is filled with idols; we've just changed the names. They used to have an idol named Bacchus that was the idol of drunkenness. America's serving that idol. They had an idol called Aphrodite and Venus that was the god of lust. The world is serving that idol today. They had a god they called Mars that was the god of violence. The world is serving that idol today. They had an idol they called Sophia that was the feminist goddess of knowledge, sophistication. The world is serving that idol today. And, I'm telling you, if we expect Jesus Christ to come, we need to turn from idols and serve the living and the true God.

Conclusion

There is impending wrath—the wrath is coming. There is an expectant wait—we're waiting for Jesus. And, there is an exemplary work—we are to serve him. That's why we're linking prophecy with "One Step Higher"—as His coming gets nearer, we want to be moving upward, amen? I don't want to meet Jesus with hatred in my heart, and booze in my cabinet, and God's tithe in my pocket. I want to be ready to go. You see, listen, it's one thing to expect Him; it's another thing to anticipate Him. This scripture says we are waiting for Him (1 Thessalonians 1:10)—that is, we are longing, looking, loving, learning of His coming.

They were waiting for a train to come at the train station. The stationmaster was there, and a young lady was there. Well, let me tell you the difference between the two of them: the stationmaster knew exactly when the train was to arrive. He knew the number of the train; he knew the engineer; he knew the number of cars; he knew the passengers—he knew all of that, because he had all of that information. He had his chart; he had his schedule—he knew all about it. The young lady did not know nearly as much as the stationmaster knew about that, but the young lady had her fiancé on that train. She was waiting for him to come, because they were going to get married and hopefully live forever after. Now folks, don't you study this like a train schedule. We're waiting for Jesus. We're not just trying to get facts in our head; we are anticipating the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom.

We're going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air—what a day that will be! God forbid—God forbid—that we should be careless, and carnal, and sleeping, and selfish, when Jesus comes. The Bible says, *"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"* (1 John 3:3). We're waiting on the Bridegroom; we're waiting on Jesus. That's the reason the last prayer of the Bible says, *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus"* (Revelation 22:20). They turned from idols to serve the living and the true God. May that be true of us.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Now,

you cannot serve a God you do not know, and you cannot know God until you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. “Pastor Rogers, would Jesus save me today?” Yes, He will. I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if you will trust Him, He will save you. The Bible says, clearly and plainly, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:31).

If you’re already saved, would you begin to pray for those round about you—the ones in front of you, the ones behind you, the one on either side? Hopefully everybody will be being prayed for right now. Will you pray, “Dear God, if that individual that I am praying for does not know You, may they, today, give their heart to You and be saved”? And, if you want to be saved, let me lead you in this prayer, and God will save you today, I promise you on His authority, for the Bible says, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:13).

I want to invite you to pray this way: “Dear God”—just speak to Him—“Dear God, I acknowledge my sin. I am a sinner. I need to be saved. I deserve judgment, but I want mercy. Jesus, You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You for dying for me. Thank You for being my substitute. I believe You’re the Son of God. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now, this moment, right now, I receive You as my Lord and Savior. By an act of faith, I receive You into my heart, into my life, as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin; cleanse me of every sin—cleanse me, Jesus. Thank You for doing that. Oh, thank You, Lord, for doing it. Take possession of my life. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. Thank You for saving me. Help me never, never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Getting Ready for the Rapture

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 4, 1991

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10

*“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead,
even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”*

1 THESSALONIANS 1:10

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Introduction

Take God's Word and open to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, would you, please. First Thessalonians chapter 1, and, when you have it open, look up here. And may I tell you today we begin a brand new series of messages on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And the title of this series is this: “Our Coming King”—Our Coming King. I'm

looking forward to the coming of our dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I love the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. I love it, because God the Father loves it. And He has so much to say in the Holy Bible about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

In the Bible, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is not incidental; it is fundamental. It is a major theme in the Word of God. I love it, because God the Father loves it. I love it, because the early church loved it. These early Christians, my dear friend, spoke often one to another about Jesus Christ and his Second Coming. I love it, because the devil hates it. If there's any doctrine that the devil would like to see removed from our churches, it is this: that Jesus Christ may come at any moment. And no wonder the devil doesn't like the doctrine of Second Coming of Jesus Christ, because, when Christ comes, he's going to be cast into the pit. He's not there yet, but he will be put there, my dear friend; he'll get the longest prison sentence on record—and I hope it is with hard labor. My dear friend, I love it, because Satan hates it. I love the Second Coming of Jesus, because one day, and soon and very soon, I will lay these very eyes upon the Lamb of God who died for me. And what a day that will be when Jesus comes! And so I believe that we, ladies and gentlemen, are on a collision course with destiny, and we cannot afford to be ignorant.

Now the signs of the times are all around us. But I've stopped looking for the signs almost; I'm listening for the shouts. I believe soon we're going to hear the shout, *"Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him"* (Matthew 25:6). One of the most blessed truths that I know is this: that Jesus may come at any moment—at any moment. The last prayer of the Bible is this: *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus"* (Revelation 22:20). And perhaps today, perhaps before I finish this series, perhaps before I finish this sermon, perhaps before I finish this sentence, Jesus will come. With that in mind, may I tell you that the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians have much to say about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, that is the dominant theme in these two books. And that's the reason I have chosen selective passages from these two books for our study.

I. The Impending Wrath

Our passage today is 1 Thessalonians 1 and verses 9 and 10. The Apostle Paul says, *"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven..."*—one of the most beautiful and pregnant phrases in all of the Scripture—*"to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come"* (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10).

Now I want to take these verses, and back in to them, as it were. I want to take the last part first. And first of all, let me talk to you about what we see there, the dark line in

verse 10, *“the wrath to come”*—the wrath to come. Write down these words: “impending wrath”—impending wrath. There is something that the Bible calls *“the wrath to come.”* Not only is Jesus coming; there is something coming that the Bible calls *“the wrath to come.”*

Now what is this? It is, ladies and gentlemen, the Great Tribulation. You think that we’re having difficulty now—the Great Tribulation, *“the wrath to come,”* will make these days seem as a Sunday School picnic. *“The wrath to come,”* the Great Tribulation. will be a time of Hell on earth. It will be a time of unspeakable sufferings. The prophet Daniel warned about those times. And put in your margin Daniel chapter 12 and verse 1. Daniel said, *“And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time”* (Daniel 12:1). A time of trouble, he said, incomparable, without parallel, never before in history, Daniel said, never again will there be a time like this time.

And the Lord Jesus Christ warned about it. Matthew 24, verse 21 and following—put it in your margin. Jesus Christ said, *“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be”* (Matthew 24:21). We’re not talking about normal tribulation, we’re not talking about the dark and horrible times that Christians have known through the centuries; we’re talking about a unique time. Daniel said, “a time of trouble.” Jesus said, “great tribulation.” The Apostle Paul said, “the wrath to come.”

Then, would you open your Bibles to Revelation chapter 6, for a moment. Keep your bookmark there in 1 Thessalonians; we’ll come back to it. But Revelation chapter 6 describes this wrath to come. And I want you to see it. Revelation chapter 6 and verse 17 speaks of a time. Well, let’s begin in verse 15: *“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne,”*—now, watch this last phrase—*“and from the wrath of the Lamb:”*—now, we speak of the gentleness of the Lamb, and the love of the Lamb. *But my dear friend, the love of God is half of the truth, but not all of the truth, and when you take half of a truth and half of a truth all of the truth, then that half of a truth becomes an untruth.* There is the wrath of the Lamb—*“For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:15–17)

All of these scriptures—Daniel, Jesus, Paul, the Apostle John—all saying the same thing. There is coming a terrible, terrible day, without precedent and without parallel, to this earth. The Bible calls it, in 1 Thessalonians 1 and verse 10, *“the wrath to come”*—impending wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

A. The White Horse of Dominion

Now let's just go back to the beginning of Revelation 6, and find out what is going to be. Because I believe, my dear friend, that the flames of judgment are already appearing on the horizon. Revelation chapter 6 and verses 1 through 3—look at it: *"I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder..."*—when it begins to thunder, what do you expect? A storm, don't you? And it was as *"the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse..."* (Revelation 6:1–2).

Now we're going to see four horsemen who will ride forth during the Great Tribulation. Some call these the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. And all of this that I'm giving you is a description of that phrase that the Apostle Paul used when he said, *"the wrath to come."* The first horse is the white horse of dominion. Look at it: *"And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer"* (Revelation 6:2). Who is it that rides this white horse? It is none other than the Antichrist himself. A white horse, in Bible typology, speaks of dominion. It speaks of conquest. It speaks of triumph. And during this time, the devil's messiah, the Antichrist, will rule the world. He has a bow in his hand, which is a symbol of power. He has a crown on his head, which is a symbol of dominion. You say, "Will the world really be ruled by the Antichrist?" Oh, yes it will. Jesus Christ made it plain, Jesus Christ said, in John chapter 5 and verse 43, *"I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive"* (John 5:43). Jesus said, "You did not receive the true Christ, but you will receive the Antichrist." And he's riding on a white horse.

Incidentally, I recently read a newspaper article that tells of the new symbol for the United Nations that is proposed. And do you know what it is? A white horse. As a matter of fact, let me read this—here's the headline: "The White Horse as a Peace Messenger"; and this, listen to this—it's incredible: "The dove symbol of peace and communion between nations has competition now." No longer the dove, my dear friend—the white horse. "The design of the white horse was donated for the purpose of a peaceful uniting of five continents, symbolized through strength to assure freedom and unity. At the head of the horse, the United Nations' emblem is to be seen with five different ribbons symbolizing the five continents." World organizations recognize five continents—Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Australia. We have a new symbol of peace: a white horse, uniting the world. Well, you know, the prophet Daniel said, in Daniel chapter 8 and verse 25, concerning the Antichrist, "Through peace, he will destroy many" (Daniel 8:25).

B. The Red Horse of Destruction

First, there is the white horse of dominion, and then, there's the red horse of destruction. Look, if you will, in verse 4: *"And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword"* (Revelation 6:4). The red horse of destruction.

Red is the color of blood. And when this devil-inspired Antichrist rides forth to conquer, ideas of conquest will come into his evil brain. And there will be war and havoc and destruction, because red is the color of blood. Have you ever thought about our world today—that it is armed to the tee with all kinds of destructive weapons? We saw just a little bit that was unleashed in the Middle East, but all of us have the idea that everyone was using restraint. Even Saddam Hussein himself did not let go with his poison gas or his nuclear capability, if he has it.

General Omar Bradley, a great old man who is now gone on, observed incisively: "We know more about war than about peace, more about killing than about living. This is the 20th century's claim to progress. Knowledge of science outstrips capacity for control. We have too many men of science, too few men of God. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience, a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants." That's what General Omar Bradley had to say. Well, my dear friend, all of this is going to come to a climax. And the Bible calls it the great day of His wrath.

First, the white horse of dominion. Secondly, the red horse of destruction. And when this happens, dear friend, the spirit of hatred that is in the Antichrist will inflame the hearts and minds of men, and cause brother to kill brother, and fathers to slay their own sons. And it will be a time of unparalleled suffering, as swords drip with the blood of those who refuse to take the mark of the beast. And lying in the streets will be the stench of decaying carcasses, and the air will be filled with the moans and groans of the living—the weeping of the living and the groans of the dying. And you can understand what Jesus said, when he said, prophesying of that time, *"Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days...for then shall be great tribulation"* (Matthew 24:19–21).

C. The Black Horse of Deprivation

Ah, but there's another that rides forth—first, the white horse; then, the red horse; and then, the black horse of deprivation. Look, if you will, in chapter 6, verses 5 and 6: *"And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine"*

(Revelation 6:5–6).

What does the black horse speak of? It speaks of famine—famine. Famine invariably follows war. There are scales in this passage that would weigh out and measure food. It speaks of the scarcity of food. And it tells us that it's going to be a time of soaring prices and starving nations. And it tells us here that a measure of wheat will be sold for a penny—a denarius, which is a day's work. A measure of wheat is one meal. It'll take a day's work to get just enough to live on. Already, we live in a world with 5 billion people and one half of them approximately live in perpetual hunger already. But what will it be in the Tribulation when able-bodied men, inflamed with the spirit of hatred, go off to war, and the fields will lie untilled, and poison gas will be everywhere?

We remember in history when Titus came against Jerusalem so many years ago, almost two millennia ago, that he surrounded the city, and cut the people off from the fields of grain outside; then, he confiscated the food for his own soldiers, and starvation stalked the city, and half-demented, half-crazed mothers killed and ate their own children during that time. Well, my dear friend, a time, Jesus said, that is worse than anything history has known is yet to come.

D. **The Pale Horse of Decimation**

And so there gets ready another horse to ride. Chapter 6, verses 7 and 8, and this is the pale horse of decimation. Look, if you will: *“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth”*—that's more than a billion people—*“to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth”* (Revelation 6:7–8).

My dear friend, the word *pale* is the Greek word *khloros*. It speaks of a sickly, greenish, yellow color. And it's the horse of decimation—where millions are decimated. What this passage is telling us is, in the dark days of coming wrath, there will be hatred inspired by the Antichrist, and war brought on by that hatred, and bloodshed brought on by that war, and famine brought on; and famine produces death. And following death comes Hell.

They tell us that more people sometimes die in the aftermath of a war than die in the war itself, by cholera and epidemics and famine. But after death, according to this passage, follows Hell. Look, if you will, in verse 8: *“Death, and Hell followed with him”* (Revelation 6:8). It's not just death, but Hell follows. Death claims the body, but Hell will claim the soul. You can't crawl up in the grave and pull the dirt over your face and hide from God. My dear friend, what days these are going to be—terrible, terrible days! And I believe that the four horsemen of the Apocalypse are ready to ride. And I believe, if

you'll listen, you can hear the thundering hoof beats as they are rapidly approaching. *"The great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"* (Revelation 6:17).

E. The Demon Spirits Unleashed

This passage in 1 Thessalonians warns of the wrath to come, but, my dear friend, I've only told you a part of what will happen in the Great Tribulation. Turn to Revelation chapter 9, and look with me. It's going to be a time when demon spirits are unleashed upon this earth. Look, if you will, in Revelation 9, verse 1: *"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth:"*—who is that fallen star? My dear friend, it is Lucifer himself—*"and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit"* (Revelation 9:1). This is the abyss. And the key is given to the arch-criminal to open up the penitentiary of wicked and foul spirits who are incarcerated in the abyss. And he's given the key; Satan himself will unlock the abyss. And when he does, my dear friend, something horrible is going to happen.

Notice verse 2: *"And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power"* (Revelation 9:2–3). John Phillips uses some words to describe these locusts—I want to borrow them.

1. They Are Infernal

First of all, they are infernal. That is, they come from the pit. These locusts come from Hell. He's not talking about ordinary locusts. This is an emblem, a symbol, of demon spirits themselves—the blinding, choking, demonic forces. They are infernal spirits.

2. They Are Insatiable

They are insatiable spirits. Look, if you will, in verse 4: *"And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads"* (Revelation 9:4). Now in the east, great swarms of locusts are known to come. And they shred and devour everything in sight—every blade of grass, every green leaf. They've been known, even, to strip trees of their bark. But not these locusts. These locusts will not feed on green things; they will feed and feast on men—on men. And they will not be sated; they are insatiable.

3. They Are Intolerable

But not only are they insatiable; they are intolerable. Look, if you will, in verses 5 and 6: *"And to them it was given that they should not kill them,"*—that is, they don't kill these men—*"but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man"* (Revelation 9:5).

Have you ever been bitten by a scorpion? I have. My dear friend, to say that it was not pleasant is certainly an understatement. But these locusts—thousands, millions, perhaps billions of them—out of the pit will have the power to inflict pain—intolerable, terrible pain. How terrible is that pain? Well, the Bible says in verse 6: *“In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them”* (Revelation 9:6). Men would gladly embrace death. What we call *death* would be a welcomed release from the torment inflicted by these demonic spirits that are going to be let loose on the earth.

4. They Are Irresistible

Not only are they intolerable; they are irresistible. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *“And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle”* (Revelation 9:7). Here they go forth, marching, prancing, dancing, racing, running; and who can stop them? Who can stand against the rapid progress of these demonic forces that are let out of the pit?

5. They Are Invincible

They're irresistible; they are invincible. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *“And on their heads were as it were crowns like gold”* (Revelation 9:7). What does that mean? It means that Satan has been given dominion. Satan is temporarily on the throne. It is the devil's millennium. Hell is having a holiday.

6. They Are Intelligent

They are, my dear friend, irresistible, invincible; they are intelligent. Look, if you will, in verse 7 again: *“And their faces were as the faces of men”* (Revelation 9:7). In Bible typology, the face of a man speaks of intelligence—but human intelligence. And it has always been human wisdom to ridicule the truth of God. Satan's appeal is always to the mind, and not to the heart and the conscience, as it is in Scripture. These demonic spirits give us some idea of how we learn about the wiles and the seductiveness of the Satan, who is very crafty and very intelligent.

7. They Are Insidious

But they're also insidious. Look, if you will, in verse 8: *“And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions”* (Revelation 9:8). No ordinary locusts, these. The hair of women speaks of the seductiveness and attractive fancies of demonic forces. The Bible warns us of seducing spirits. And the devil would seduce so many. And that's what it means here, I believe, with *“the hair of women.”*

But you better look beyond, my dear friend, the outward fancy of Satan and the outward attractiveness of this angel of light, because he's also a roaring lion! The Bible says, and he has teeth as the teeth of lions to shred and devour those that they fall upon. They are insidious—hair like women, but teeth like lions.

8. They Are Insensitive

And they are insensitive. Verse 9—they are insensitive: *“And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron”* (Revelation 9:9). What does that mean? It means, dear friend, for a while they will be immune to harm. It will do puny and sinful men no good to fight back. How often we underestimate the power of Satan and we make jokes about the power of Satan. But they are, my dear friend, insensitive.

9. They Are Inescapable

But they are inescapable. Notice, if you will, the last part of verse 9: *“And the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle”* (Revelation 9:9). Everywhere, the air is filled with the noise of these demonic spirits. You will not outwit them; you will not outrun them.

10. They Are Injurious

They are injurious. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *“And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months”* (Revelation 9:10). Five months is the normal life span of a locust. And the writer of Revelation, the old Apostle John, uses that to tell us that these demonic forces, who have stings like scorpions—they are going to run their course. They have power to injure.

11. They Are Indivisible

But last of all, they are indivisible. Look, if you will, in 11 and 12: *“And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon”* (Revelation 9:11). Now my dear friend, there is a king over these locusts. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness” (Ephesians 6:12). This name literally means, “destruction.” A mighty prince demon, perhaps Satan himself, is the one who is leading these, who would torture those who dwell upon the earth during the Great Tribulation, that the Bible calls *“the wrath to come.”*

II. The Expectant Wait

Now I’ll admit that I’ve said much that we don’t find here in 1 Thessalonians. But if you’ll go back to it, I just wanted to take that excursion through the Scripture just to give you some idea about what we’re talking about, when we say that Jesus is coming to deliver us from the wrath to come—the wrath to come, the wrath to come. And so write down, first of all, “impending wrath”—impending wrath. There’s a day coming, never been a day like it.

Secondly, write down, “the expectant wait.” Look, if you will, in verse 10: *“And to wait for his Son from heaven...”*—1 Thessalonians 1 and verse 10—*“to wait for his Son from*

heaven...”—now listen to this; here’s the good part—“...*which delivered us from the wrath to come*” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Do you see that? “His Son, who hath delivered us from the wrath to come.”

Here’s the question. Will the Church go through this Great Tribulation? Will the Church be subject to the wrath to come? I think not. And I’ll tell you why not. I believe that the Bible clearly teaches that the Church will be taken out of the wrath to come.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 9, if you will, for just a moment. Look at it: “*For God hath not appointed us to wrath...*”—do you see that?—“*God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation*”—deliverance—“*by our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Now the Apostle John told that church at Philadelphia the same thing—Revelation 3, verse 10: “*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation*”—out of the hour of temptation, literally—“*which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth*” (Revelation 3:10).

“Well,” you say, “that’s what John said to the church at Philadelphia; but he didn’t say that to the church at Bellevue.” Well, Revelation 3, verse 13, after that, says, “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*” (Revelation 3:13). What He says to Philadelphia, he says to us. If we will keep the word of His patience, He will deliver us from that hour of temptation (Revelation 3:10). God does not pour out His wrath upon his children; He chastises His children. But His wrath is for the unsaved. And before God pours out wrath, God takes His children out.

Before a kingdom declares war on another kingdom, first of all, what does it do? What does that kingdom do? They call the nationals home before they declare war. And before God poured out fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, the angel said to Lot, “I can’t do anything till you come forth. Get Lot out of Sodom before wrath falls” (Genesis 19:22). Lot was taken out, and then the wrath fell. Poor, backslidden Lot—still, he was saved, and he had to be taken out.

Before God sent the flood in Noah’s time, what did He do? He took Enoch out before the flood came, as a picture, an illustration, that, before God pours out wrath, God takes His out. And he put Noah in the ark as a picture, dear friend, of the Jewish nation that will go through and come out of the Great Tribulation—a nation born in a day.

We are looking for Jesus to come at any moment. My dear friend, if the Church is going through the Great Tribulation, there would be certain things that would have to happen, and we could not be looking for Jesus to come at any moment.

But listen to these scriptures. Matthew 24, verse 36—Jesus said, concerning His coming: “*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only*” (Matthew 24:36). Nobody but Jesus knows the time. Matthew 24, verse 38: “*For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking,*

marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark" (Matthew 24:38). And then, the Son of man is coming. "Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage," is not exactly the Great Tribulation, my dear friend. Matthew 24, verse 42: *"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come"* (Matthew 24:42). Matthew 24, verse 44: *"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"* (Matthew 24:44). If the Church is going through the Great Tribulation, I can simply start marking off the days—the Tribulation is seven years, divided into two periods of 3 1/2 years. I could count down the time. But the Bible teaches that we are looking for Jesus; we are waiting for His Son from Heaven; we're not waiting for the Tribulation. Mark 13, verses 32 and following: *"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is"* (Mark 13:32–33).

Over and over, our Lord is telling us to be ready. He has delivered us from the wrath to come. If the Church is going through the Great Tribulation, then, rather than looking up, I start looking around. I'm waiting, not for Christ, but for Antichrist. There is no blessed hope. Death would be better than to go through the Tribulation and into the kingdom. Oh, my dear friend, the impending wrath, but the expectant wait. We are waiting for Jesus.

III. The Exemplary Work

And then, last and quickly, the exemplary work. What should we do? The title of the message is "Getting Ready for the Rapture." How did these people get ready for the Second Coming of Jesus? Well, look in verse 9, if you will: *"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come"* (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10).

A. Turn to God from Idols

First of all, if you would get ready for the Rapture, you need to turn to God from idols. You say, "Well, Americans don't have any idols." Oh, we have old gods—we've just renamed them. Rather than the god Mammon, which speaks of greed, we call it ambition. Rather than the god Bacchus, who was the god of debauchery and wine, we just call it having a good time—the happy hour. Rather than the goddess Aphrodite, which was the goddess of sexual lusts, we just renamed that god and we call it the sexual revolution. It's the same old god or goddess with new names; the same old idol. Now today, rather than the god Mars, which was the god of war, we just call it righteous

indignation; and we have more strife and crime and hatred right here in our city. Old gods with new names.

What is an idol? An idol is anything you love more than God. An idol is anything you trust more than God. An idol is anything you serve more than God. An idol is anything you fear more than God. I don't care what it is; it's an idol—it's an idol. The Bible says, in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*" (Matthew 6:33). You must turn to God from idols. You cannot have Jesus Christ and this world at the same time. You must repent. That's the first thing to get ready for the Rapture. Have you turned to the true and the living God? Have you forsaken the old way? Have you given your heart to Jesus Christ, who is the true and living God?

B. Serve the True and Living God

May I tell you the second thing, my dear friend, that you must do? Not only did they turn to God from idols, but they began to serve the true and the living God. Now I want to tell you that you may say, "Adrian, I believe the things that you are preaching about prophecy. I always love to hear a preacher preach on prophecy." Well, I want to tell you, my dear friend, with all of the unction, function, and emotion of my soul, if you believe what I am saying today, you are going to begin to serve Jesus. You're going to get your head out of the clouds of prophecy, and get your feet on the pavement of soul winning. I tell you the real test whether or not you believe what I'm saying is what are you doing to warn men to flee from the wrath to come. I mean, do you really believe these things that we have preached today? We'll work till Jesus comes; and then we'll be gathered home.

C. Wait for Jesus to Come

And I'll tell you the third thing that they did—look at it again: they are waiting for Jesus to come. They're waiting for Jesus, not as some last resort, not as some fire escape, but, if you'll study the Scripture, they're saying, "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*" (Revelation 22:20). They were looking for His coming. They were longing for His coming. They were living for His coming. They were praying for His coming. They were dying for His coming. "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*"

Conclusion

You need to get this out of your notebook and into your heart. Dear old Dr. Vance Havner told an illustration of a woman who was waiting at the train station for her fiancé to come. He was coming in on the train, and they were going to get married. She was there, waiting for the train, waiting for the train—looking, listening, longing. The old stationmaster was there also. He had all of the charts; he had all of the schedules. He knew about the facts of that train coming. But oh, he was not expecting like she was,

because her bridegroom was on that train. And I want the spirit, not of the stationmaster; I want the spirit of that young lady.

Come, Lord Jesus! Come, Lord Jesus! The Bible says we are to wait for His Son from heaven, who hath delivered us from the wrath of God (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Ready for His Return

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 18, 1985 Time: 00AM

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

1 THESSALONIANS 1:10

Outline

Introduction

I. Be Saved

II. Be Serving

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V. Be Sharing

VI. Be Separated

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Introduction

Take God's Word please and open to 1 Thessalonians. And we begin today a brand new series in this wonderful book. You may be interested to know that scholars believe that this was the first book written in the New Testament. It's a very interesting book. And the theme of the book is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And so we're going to be thinking quite a bit in the days and weeks and months to come about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And we're going to preach, God willing, not only through 1 Thessalonians, but also through 2 Thessalonians. Just open to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. You're going to notice as we read verses 9 and 10 that these verses speak of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And I'm going to break in in verse 9: "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Underscore the phrase, if you have your own Bible, "...and to wait for his Son from heaven..." You will note that this chapter ends with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And so does chapter 2 and so does chapter 3 and so does chapter 4 and so does chapter 5. Every chapter deals with the Second Coming of Jesus and it ends with a statement concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The most thrilling fact of the past is that Christ for our sins. The most thrilled fact of the future is that Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth – actually, literally, bodily. Christ Jesus, my friend, is coming again. And I want to tell you that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the only sure hope for this jittery old world in which we live. And it's the only thing really, folks, that makes sense out of our sorrows and the storms of life that Nan was just singing about.

This past week I stood, as I often do, at the side of a casket, preached a funeral message. My heart was broken. One of Bellevue's most noble layman, godly deacon, soul winner, Bible teacher, Harry Johnston, stepped from here on over into glory. But, you know, funerals are always occasions of sadness. And there was that lifeless clay banked with those beautiful flowers, poignant messages there on the flowers. One said, "To Pop." Another, "To Grandpappa." And I loved at that and I thought, *Oh, how he was loved*. And then just before they closed that casket, I saw precious little Barbara, that mate who had lived with him and stood by him and served with him and prayed with him and loved with him, I watched her as she walked past the casket there and just laid a hand on his sleeve, one final touch before they closed that casket. And I don't mind telling you, friend, that the tears popped out of my eyes and my heart was deeply moved. And I thought to myself, *What do people do who don't know Jesus?*

Mr. Humanist, Mr. Materialist, Mr. Secularist, are you going to tell me that this is all there is; that life is some kind of a colossal bad joke that's going to end that way in a veil of tears and separation for, forever, and all that we can look forward to is a hole in the ground and death and decay and separation? I tell you, no! There's something else, something better. And that's what the book of 1 Thessalonians is about. Paul has written this book to comfort those who had loved ones who died. They were yet living, and the loved ones had died. And he says in this book, after he talks about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and our resurrection, he says, "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

And I'm praying that as I teach and preach on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, first of all, that it will be informative, but more than that, that it will be comforting, and even more than that, that it'll help you to prepare. Because, folks, listen to me. Choir, listen to me. He's coming. We'd better be ready. We better be ready. And this is a book. It's not just a, it's not just to give us some interesting facts. It is not just primarily some facts to be studied. It is a truth to be enjoyed and to be lived.

I heard of a boy who flunked out of college. He wrote his mom and he said, "Mom, I have flunked out of college. I am coming home. Prepare dad!" She wrote back and said, "Dad prepared. Prepare yourself!"

Now, friend, let me tell you something. Jesus Christ is coming. And as Jesus Christ comes again, we had better be prepared. We had better be ready. And the title of our

message this morning is, “Ready for His Return.” And I want to tell you how you can be ready for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. So let’s go back up to chapter 1 and verse 1: “Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God...” Now underscore the phrase, “in God the Father.” “...and in the Lord Jesus Christ...” Underscore that phrase, “in the Lord Jesus Christ.” “...Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” And notice that grace always come before peace in the Bible. Always grace and then peace. Never peace and grace. Why? Friend, you’ll never know peace until you experience grace. And it’s always this order. But notice.

I. Be Saved

If you would be ready for His return, number one, be saved—be saved. Now he’s talking about those who are in Christ. Notice that little phrase. It’s used at least 140 times in the Bible – “in Christ.” It is only a small little phrase, but, my friend, a little key can unlock a very big door, and it does right here. As a matter of fact, it’s one of the most significant phrases in all of the Bible.

You see, everybody has to be some place, right? Everybody’s got to be somewhere. You remember that old story. Everybody’s got to be somewhere. And I want to tell you something, friend. Everybody here is in one of two places. Either you’re in Christ or you’re in Adam. In Christ all are made alive. In Adam all die. In Adam all die. In Christ all are made alive.

Now everybody in this congregation this morning is either in Adam or in Christ. Now if I am in Christ, all that pertains to Christ pertains to me. If I am in Adam, all that pertains to Adam pertains to me. You see, to be in Christ is a change of position. I step out of the old nature, the old life, and I step in to Christ. It is a change of position. And because it is a change of position, it, dear friend, becomes a change of possession. All that belongs to Jesus now belongs to me. I have the riches of God in Christ Jesus. That’s what the Bible says. And so, you’re looking at a multi-billionaire, for the Scripture says, “All things are yours, and ye are God’s and God is Christ and, and ye are Christ and Christ is God’s.” What that means is that all of the treasures of heaven belong to me and to you, those of us who are in Christ Jesus. A change of position brings a change of possession.

Suppose that you were born an Englishman and you became an American, and you became a naturalized American citizen. Then for you, dear friend, the Revolutionary War, that used to be defeat, now becomes a victory.

You see, before you were saved Calvary for you is a defeat. After you’re saved Calvary for you is a victory. You come from defeat to victory when you come out of Adam and into Christ. And because there’s a change of, of, of position, there’s a change

of possession, there's a change of privilege. I have now all of the privileges of a Christian because I am in Christ, and the great privilege to come right into the throne room. I dare not come. I must not come unless I come to the throne room through Jesus with God as my Father and Christ my elder brother.

I read a long time ago about little Todd Lincoln, the son of Abraham Lincoln when he was just a little boy. He walked into his father's office past all of those guards, past all of those secretaries, and walked right in. Passed them all. Paid them no attention. Just brushed past them, went in there with a broken toy, and crawled up into his father's lap with a broken toy and ask the President of the United States to fix his toy. And guess what? He did.

Now there's the President, and a little boy walks in. Now why don't you try to go walking into Ronald Reagan's office today and see what happens, okay. There'll be something broken. It won't be a toy. You just go walking in there and try and push those guards aside. You can't do that because you see, dear friend, you don't have the right. You don't have the authority. You don't have the privilege. But through the Lord Jesus Christ we have that privilege. The Bible says that God has sent forth His Spirit into our heart, crying Abba Father. And it is as though we can sit in the very lap of God and put our arms around His neck to be in Christ. Are you in Christ? Have you stepped out of Adam and into the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, if not, you're not ready for His return.

II. Be Serving

But not only, dear friend, should you be saved; you should be serving. Let's go down to verses 2 and 3. Paul says, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers." Paul said, "Every time I think of this church, I just say, 'Praise God.'" And he tells you why he praises God for this church. Verse 3: "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Now once you are in the Lord Jesus, three things are going to be true about you. First of all, a work of faith. Now, folks, I want to make it clear and plain that you are not saved by works. You're saved by grace through faith. Ephesians first, chapter 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of—what?—works, lest any man should boast." We're not saved by joining a church. We're not saved by giving our money. We're not saved by getting baptized. We're not saved by keeping the Ten Commandments. It is not of works. There are going to be no strutters, no peacocks in heaven. It is all of grace.

But now listen to me, dear friend. Though we are saved by faith and not by works, we are saved by faith alone. But the faith that saves is never alone. *We are not saved by faith and works, but we are saved by faith that works.* And if you tell me that you're

saved and you're not serving the Lord Jesus Christ, I want to tell you, dear friend, you've just kidded yourself. Listen. The word *believe*, our English word comes from an old English word, by-life. What a man really believes he lives by. *If your faith hasn't changed your life, you'd better change your faith.* You don't have the Bible kind.

Friend, "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation..." There is a work of faith. And do you know the great need of Bellevue Baptist Church? It's for workers. Now you know the tragedy of 20th Century Christianity is Sunday morning benchwarmers. There are so many people get to church on Sunday morning; get here and think this is serving God. This isn't serving God. This is the worship service. We're here getting ready to serve God. It's like a service station. We're here just to pump you full of Jesus, and then you're to go out and serve the Lord.

And one of the ways that you can serve Him is through ministry in this church. And we have a great need of workers, a tremendous need. But many of you are not serving the Lord. You, well, you say, "There's always that little group that does everything in Bellevue." Hey, how would you like to become a part of that little group? Just nod your head. You, you say, "Well, I, I won't to be on the inside." All right, fine. Let me tell you how to do it. Let me tell you how to get on the inside. Number one: You make certain that you believe right. Number two: You live right. Live a pure and a godly life. Number three: You be faithful. Number four: You train yourself or allow yourself to be trained. Number five: You make yourself available. We'll wear you out. Don't you go around here talking about, "Oh, everybody's just in a little group just doesn't everything."

My dear friend, you're needed to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. There's a work of faith. You tell me you're saved and ready for His return. Is He going to come and find you idle?

*Oh, he wasn't much for stirring about; it wasn't his desire.
While others worked to build their church, he was sitting by the fire.
Same old story day by day; he never seemed to tire.
No matter what the others did, he was sitting by the fire.
At last he came to die; as all must do. Some say he went up higher.
But if he's doing what he used to do, he's sitting by the fire.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

You listen to me, folks. You tell me that you're saved and yet you don't serve! There is a work of faith. I'm not saying that that work saves you. I'm saying that it shows that you're saved. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works..." Ephesians 2:8-9.

But not only was there work of faith. There was a labor of love. Look at it there. Look at the next phrase there. "...a labor of love..." Now what does that mean? Well, work

talks about what you do. Labor talks about what it cost you to do what you do. Now what he's saying is this: The word *labor* speaks of toil. It speaks of being fatigued. It speaks of energy. There is no cheap way. There is no lazy way to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. We sing that song, "Toiling on, toiling on," and well we might.

It's time, my dear friend, that our King is coming and He finds us not so much occupied with His coming, but occupying until He comes. That means being a faithful servant. And notice, it is a labor of what? Love. Let me tell you why a slave serves. A slave serves because he has to. Let me tell you why an employee serves. He serves because he needs to. He needs the money. Let me tell you why a Christian serves. A Christian serves because he loves Jesus—because he loves Jesus. It is a labor of love. I cannot work my soul to save; that work my Lord has done. But I will work like any slave for the love of God's dear Son.

And then notice, also, "...a patience of hope.." What does that mean? Well, you have to understand what the word patient means—*patience* means. It doesn't mean the ability to deal with little tedious matters. It is not the ability to teach a Sunday school class or to thread a needle or something like that. That's not what he's talking about. Not that kind of patience. The Bible word *patience* here, the Greek word, means to bear up under. It talks not just simply of resigning yourself to a certain amount of suffering, but it means manly endurance, forbearance. It means that you stay with it and you bear up under it. And it is the patience that is rooted in hope.

And the Bible word *hope* here does not mean something that we wish would happen or think might happen. "Are you going to the ballgame next week?" "Well, I hope so." That's not the way the word is used here. The word here in the Bible means confidence, absolute, total confidence. But it means more than that. It means expectancy. But it means more than that. It means desire.

Now listen. When you put those together, when you know, absolutely know that it's going to happen. Therefore, you expect it to happen. And you desire it to happen. All of those things together – confidence plus expectancy plus desire – that's the Bible word for hope. And that's the reason the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is called the blessed hope. We're confident that He's coming. We're expecting Him to come. We desire Him to come. And that is the blessed hope of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And you put those three things together, friend. If you have a work of faith, a labor of love, and a patience of hope, then you're ready for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Be Sure

Because, when He comes, you need to be saved. And when He comes, you need to be serving. But, thirdly, when He comes, you need to be sure. Notice verses 4-5: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only,

but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance..." Now underscore the phrase, "much assurance." Much assurance. You need to have a confidence. You need to know that you know that you're saved. Now it's wonderful that you can be saved, but, friend, it's even more wonderful that you can be saved and know it. Say amen.

I'm going to tell you something even more wonderful than that you can be saved and know it. You can be saved, you can know that you're saved, and you can also know that you can never lose it. Now, friend, that's wonderful. I mean, it would be wonderful just if you could be saved and, and hope maybe you're saved. But you can be saved, and you can know that you're saved, and you can also know that you can never lose it. And right here let me tell you how that you can have this surety.

First of all, look, if you will, in verse 4: "Knowing, brethren..." Underscore the phrase "knowing." Not hope so. Not guess so. "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." Do you know what your election is? That's when God chose you. That's when God selected you. Well, when did God choose you? Before you chose Him. When did God elect you? Before this world was created, before He swung this world into space. The Bible says we're the chosen of God before the foundation of the world. God is a God of love. What good is it being a God of love if you don't have someone to love? So God set His affection on us. God said, "I'm going to create a people, call a people out for My name. They will be My elect." And God foreknew and God foreordained that we would be saved. Glory. Hallelujah. Before we'd done anything good, before we'd done anything bad, we were the elect of God.

Now what gives me surety about that is this, my dear friend: That what has been settled in eternity can never be undone in time. Say amen. Listen, folks. We are sure because we are the elect of God. God chose us. Now that doesn't mean that we don't have a responsibility, but it does mean, dear friend, that we can love Him because He first loved us. It does mean that we can choose Him because He first chose us. Well, you say, "Brother Rogers, I don't know whether I'm one of the elect or not." Would you like to find out? I can tell you how you can find out. Dwight L. Moody said—he was a great evangelist of yesteryear—"The elect, the elect are the whosoever wills. The non-elect are the whosoever won'ts." So if you will, you can be saved. The Bible says, "Whosoever will may come." Isn't that wonderful?

You see, anybody who wants to be saved is one of God's elect. And election is not some way of keeping you out. It is God's way of saying, "I have chosen you. I love you, and I invite you." But oh, my precious friend, listen to me. There is the first step of being sure, and that is the will of God, verse 4, which speaks of our election. Not only the will of God, but the work of Christ in verse 5, which speaks of the gospel, for Paul says, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power and of the Holy Ghost and

much assurance.”

Now listen. There’s the work of Christ. What is the gospel? That Christ died for our sins. Now Jesus died for our sins. That is the gospel. And when He died for our sins, He bowed His head and He said, “It is finished!” And the word that He said, “It is finished,” is the, ah, Greek word *tetalesti*, which means paid in full. It would be marked on a bill when a bill was paid in full. Nothing else is owed. Jesus said it is paid in full. Now, you see, it doesn’t depend upon me. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. If it depended upon me, I could never know, dear friend, that I’m saved.

Suppose you’re hanging over a fire by a chain of forged steel – a thousand links in that chain, every one of them impeccably perfect except for one that is made of crepe paper. How safe are you? Now, friend, I don’t care if there are 999 links in that chain that are absolutely perfect. If you’ve got one made of crepe paper, you have no safety at all, isn’t that right? If anything in this salvation depends upon you, you’re not going to make it.

But the Bible says, “He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him.” Dear friend, it is the work of Christ. When Christ died on the cross, He said, “It is finished!” Listen. God the Father planned it. God the Son provided it. And then God the Holy Spirit makes it real. Look again, if you will, in this passage of Scripture. He says, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance...”

Do you know what we have in America that’s so sad? It’s word only gospel. I mean, a man’s just preaching. Friend, if all that is happening here today is a man named Adrian Rogers is making a speech, then not much is happening. It must be not only what I say, but what the Holy Spirit of God says. It cannot be just word only. Paul said, “We’re witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him.” And I am absolutely, totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God to take what I say and bring it unto you. I’ve told you before, and I guess I’ll tell you a thousand times that anything I can talk you into somebody else can talk you out of. But, brother, when God the Holy Spirit whispers a silent amen to your heart, it comes with a much assurance. How do I know that I’m saved? Because God’s Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God. You say, “Has He, did you hear Him audibly?” No. You say, “Is it an emotional feeling?” No. It is not an emotional feeling. Now I’m not against emotions, but nobody can know that they’re saved because of an emotional feeling. Because, as Dr. Baxter said, your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. Salvation is the deepest work of God. God doesn’t do the deepest work in the shallowest part.

You see, dear friend, plants have a body, but they don’t have a soul. Animals have a body and a soul, but they don’t have a spirit. Only man has a spirit. He’s made in the

image of God. And the spirit is the organ of spiritual knowledge. And when God speaks to you, God speaks to your spirit. It is not emotion. It is something stronger than emotion. It is a deep consciousness that you belong to Jesus Christ. If you depend upon your emotions for your assurance, you'll never have real assurance. Nobody should ever say, "Praise God, I know I'm saved because I feel it," or, "I am saved. I know I'm saved because I'm happy." You might say, "I'm happy because I know I'm saved," but there's a big difference in that.

Let me tell you something. *The most miserable man on earth is not a lost man. He is a saved man out of fellowship with God.* Can you say amen to that? A saved man out of fellowship with God, the most miserable man on earth. Oh my friend, listen to me today. Pay attention to me today. If Jesus Christ is coming, and He is, then you should be saved. You should be serving. You should be sure. How am I sure? Here it is: The will of God, the work of Christ, the witness of the Spirit – right in these verses, verses 4-5. The will of God, your election. The work of Christ, the gospel. The witness of the Spirit, much assurance in the Holy Ghost. *Let me tell you what's so wonderful about our salvation. God thought it. Jesus bought it. The Spirit brought it.* Isn't that wonderful? You see, and that's where we get this great, great assurance.

IV. Be Steadfast

All right, now listen. Saved. Serving. Sure. Now let's go on and look, if we will, in verse 6: "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." You need to be steadfast. There was affliction. There was persecution. These people suffered for the name of Christ, but they didn't quit. Friend, you can tell the size of a Christian by what it takes to stop him. Did you know that some people will get their feelings hurt and stop coming to church? Did you know that? Some people will feel neglected. Or something won't go just the way they think it ought to go in a, in a committee meeting or in a business meeting. Isn't that silly/ Isn't that foolish, when Christ died for us? Oh my friend, if you can't handle these kind of things, what are you going to do when real persecution arises? What are you going to do when real suffering begins to take place?

I'm telling you that the servant is not better than his master. And when Jesus Christ comes again, we had better be steadfast. You can tell the size of a Christian by what it takes to stop him. All hell can't stop a real Christian. The Bible says, "They that endure to the end shall be saved." Does that mean they're saved because they endure? No. It means they endure because they're saved, mister. It means because they have something real. They're not some of these morning-glory Christians. We don't know much about persecution. We stand and sing on Sunday morning, "Faith of our Fathers, holy faith; we will be true till Thee, to Thee to death," and we don't even get back on

Sunday night, much less Wednesday night. God help us. Steadfast.

V. Be Sharing

But then, look again. Not only steadfast, but sharing. You should be sharing if Jesus is coming again. And so, look in verse 7: “So that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and in Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.” Do you know what that means? That’s an exciting passage.

Now these folks—pay attention now—these folks had been saved for less than a year. This is a baby church to which he’s writing. He’s writing to them about the Second Coming of Jesus and election and all of these things. And he’s saying, “Your faith is sounded out.” The word *sounded out* means a trumpet blast. Everywhere they know about this church. They were sharing their faith in the Lord Jesus.

Hey, how would you like to make me a better preacher? Let me tell you how you can make me a better preacher. By living what I preach. The apostle Paul said, “When we would go some place, before we would get there, they’d already heard of your example.” Read it. It’s right there in the text that I just read to you. Verse 7: “You were examples...” And then he says in verse 8, “The Word went out. And when we got there, we didn’t even need to say anything. I mean, they already believed. They believed because they saw the way that you lived.”

I want to tell you, Dr. Lane, my heart just almost jumps out of my throat as I look at this congregation on Sunday morning and the other two congregations that I’ve already preached to, and I say, “My God, what would happen if people like that began to live the Lord Jesus Christ every day in every place, trumpeting forth the gospel?” I could get up on Sunday morning and just say, “Mary had a little lamb,” and give an invitation, and folks would come forward. Of course, she did have a little Lamb. His name was Jesus. And just give an invitation and people would come to Jesus, because Paul said, “We didn’t even need to say anything the way you were living.” Listen, folks. Don’t get the idea that God’s plan of evangelism is for a pastor to stand in a pulpit and preach and folks get saved. That’s not God’s plan of evangelism. If we get folks saved in a service like this, that’s just a bonus, that’s all. God’s plan of evangelism is not for the shepherd to give birth to lambs. God’s shepherd is to feed the sheep. Healthy sheep will reproduce themselves. Every one of you should be a witness. Say amen.

Every one of you should be a witness. Every one of you should be sharing the Lord Jesus. You say, “Pastor, I don’t know how.” Well, I want to tell you some good news. I’m going to teach you how, God helping me, beginning next Sunday night. We are going to have in church training a, a course in Lifestyle Evangelism, and I am going to teach you

how to bring souls to Jesus. I am not talking about door-to-door visitation. I'm talking to you about in your family, in your business, in your neighborhood, where you live, with what you have, whether you are a new Christian or an old Christian. I want to remind you these people had not had a seminary education. They have not been Christians but a year. And they turned that part of the world upside down for Jesus Christ. And so can we! I cannot tell you the enthusiasm I have for what I'm going to teach. And if I could make you come next Sunday night, I would. All I can do—look up here for a moment, look right here—all I can do is just beg you. Please come. Please. Next Sunday night. When I begin this course, I want you to be here in Lifestyle Evangelism. The title of the course is going to be, "Love Worth Sharing." I am convinced that it will revolutionize our entire church, our city and other churches. You must be here.

VI. Be Separated

All right. Now look. Be sharing if you expect Jesus Christ to come again. The last thing, and my time is gone. Not only be sharing, but be separated. Notice verse 9: "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven..." How do you, how do you, are you ready for Jesus? You just separate yourself from idols. Well, you say, "Brother Rogers, ha, ha, we don't have any idols in America." Who are you kidding? You want me to tell you what an idol is? Friend, an idol is anything you love more, fear more, or serve more than Jesus Christ. That's an idol. Now I want....

Conclusion

You say, "Well, Pastor, I've tried to give up those things, and I just, I'm not able." Of course, you're not able. You've been misreading the Bible. The Bible does not say that you turn from idols to serve the true and the living God. Look at it. It says, "...you turn to God from idols..." You don't turn from idols to God. You turn to God from idols. You say, "What's the difference?" My dear friend, when you come to God, you don't give up your sins in order to get saved. That's only reformation. You bring your sins to Jesus. You bring your weakness to Jesus. You turn to God from idols. And you come with your weakness. You come with your fears. You come with your failures. You come with your doubts. You come to Jesus and He will give you power over these idols. Holiness is not the way to Christ. Christ is the way to holiness. You just come and bring it all to Jesus. Say, "I'm weak, Lord, but I turn to You." You cannot turn to God without turning from idols. Friend, when you give your heart to Jesus, He'll change you from the inside. And then you'll be ready to wait for His Son from heaven. I want every head bowed, every eye closed in this building this morning.

How to Get Ready for the Rapture

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 23, 1987

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

1 THESSALONIANS 1:10

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Introduction

All right, take God's Word, would you please, and turn to 1 Thessalonians, the first chapter—1 Thessalonians, the first chapter—and I want us to look in verse 10. I'm going to break into the middle of the thought, on purpose, but I'll come back to it in a moment, because of the sentence that begins in the King James with the word *and* here. Here is what it says: *“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come”* (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

I want to tell you, dear folks, the greatest fact of the past is that Jesus Christ died for us; the greatest fact of the future is that Jesus Christ is coming for us. We need to get excited about the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But not only

excited in the getaway, we need to get motivated in a very real and sober way to live in keeping with the urgency and the emergency of the hour in which we're living.

Now you know sometimes when the pastor preaches on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as I've done last Sunday and this Sunday, some people think, perhaps he's riding a hobby horse, perhaps he's putting an undue emphasis that he ought not to put. But I want to tell you, dear friend, that 25% of the Bible is prophecy—25% of it. And rightly understood, one verse out of every four points toward the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so if we're preaching as we ought, almost one sermon out of four ought to be talking about the coming of Jesus, or at least Jesus ought to be 25% of every message—His Second Coming ought to be a part of it. How we need to get ready for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And the Book of 1 Thessalonians is a book that is written to give us comfort and encouragement. If you want to understand the Book of 1 Thessalonians, let me give you a little key: every chapter ends with a statement about the Second Coming of Jesus. In the entire book of 1 Thessalonians, if you check it, when you get home—don't check it right now because I want you to listen to me—but check it when you get home, and you'll find out that every chapter ends with a verse of encouragement about the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I preached last Sunday of the fact that we are indeed living at the dawning of a new age—not what the New Age movement says, but the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we need to learn, therefore, how to wait for the coming of our Lord, to be ready for the rapture. Now I want to give you six principles that will help you to be ready when our dear Lord comes, six principles that will help you to anticipate the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now I want to say that I want to be practical this morning. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is not primarily a theory to be discussed, my dear friend; it is a truth to be lived. And I want to show you how to live it: “How to Get Ready for the Rapture.”

I. You Need to Be Certain of Your Relationship with God through Christ

Number one, be absolutely certain of your relationship with God through Christ. Look in verse 1: *“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 1:1). Now let me say, dear friend, that Paul here is talking about the relationship of the saints to God.

A. The Source of Our Relationship is Grace

And I want to show you that the source of that relationship is grace. Do you see it there in the middle of that verse? *“Grace be unto you.”*

Now what is grace? Well, somebody says, “Grace is what causes God to love us when we don’t deserve to be loved.” That’s right, grace is what makes God forgive us when we don’t deserve to be forgiven. Grace is what makes God send His Son to die for us while we were yet sinners: “*God commendeth his love toward us*” (Romans 5:8). Grace is what makes God seek us when we didn’t seek Him. I think one of the most beautiful words in all of the English language is the word *grace*. When people understand that word they want to sing songs about it, like, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me,” or, “Grace that is greater than all of our sins.” Somebody put it in a little acrostic, G-R-A-C-E—*grace* means, “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.”

Folks, listen. Salvation is not in the merit of man, it’s in the mercy of God; not in the goodness of man, but in the grace of God. Salvation is not a wage that we earn, but a gift that we’re given by God’s marvelous grace. That’s the source of that salvation. Someone wrote these words,

*Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free.
For God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.*

—CHARITIE BANCROFT

That’s grace.

B. The Satisfaction of Our Relationship is Peace

But now watch it now—not only is the source of our relationship grace, but dear friend, the satisfaction of our relationship is peace. Notice: “*Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father*” (Philippians 1:2). Do you see the word *peace* there? You see, that peace comes out of that grace, and therefore, never in the Bible do you ever read this phrase: “peace and grace.” It is always “grace and peace”—you’ll never know peace until you know grace. And I was thinking this morning coming here, just meditating on this message, of the peace of God that’s in my heart.

Now I don’t want you to think that I’m bragging, because I’m not. I’m giving God the praise. This is a testimony. But folks, I have peace in my heart—I really do. I have peace with God. I know that God is my Father, and I say there’s nothing between my soul and my Savior. I have peace with myself—not that I’m satisfied with me, but there’s that inward peace like a river that’s flowing in my soul right now. And I’d be lying if I said it was not there. And I have peace with everybody. Everybody doesn’t like me, but I love everybody.

Now you know preaching on television, or being President of the Southern Baptist Convention, or pastoring a church, there are going to be some folks that don’t like you.

And there are going to be some folks who will say some mean things about you. And every now and then, you wouldn't believe, but somebody will say something mean about me. I know you can't understand that at all, but it happens. But I tell you the truth under God—I don't have one scintilla of bitterness toward one of the five billion people on the face of this earth, and that's because of the grace of God that lends peace.

You say, "You mean you don't have any troubles?" Oh, friend, I've got a lot of them. But let me tell you that peace is not the answer of problems in life; it is the addition of power to meet those problems. It's that grace of God, that wonderful river of peace, that comes out of our relationship.

C. **The Security of Our Relationship is the Son of God**

Dear friend, listen. The source is the grace of God, the satisfaction is the peace of God, but the security is the Son of God. I want you to notice here—look at it again: "*Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is*"—now watch it—"in God..."—underscore that little phrase—"in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:1). That little word *in*—oh, what an important word that is! It's used 130 times here in the Bible. It's so important. I believe, perhaps, other than the word *God* or *Christ* or *Spirit*, that may be the most important word in all of the Bible. It's a little word in the Greek language; it's a little word in the English language. But I want to remind you that a very small key can open a very complex lock to a very large door that opens to a vast treasure; and indeed, this little phrase *in* is that word. It tells us that we are *in Christ*.

Now what does it mean to be *in Christ*? Well, everybody here today is either in Adam or in Christ. There are only two men really who have ever lived: Adam and Christ. And you're in Adam, the first man; or you are in Christ, the second man. Now the Bible says, "*In Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*" (1 Corinthians 15:22). Everybody who is in Adam shares what Adam has; everybody who is Christ shares what Christ has. For example, when you get saved, you come out of the old man, you come into Jesus—you come into Him.

Let me help you to understand that. If there's a change of position—suppose you were a citizen of Great Britain, and then you migrated to these shores, and you became an American citizen. All right, there's a change of position, and that means that the minute you became an American citizen, for you, history has been changed. The Revolutionary War for you is no longer a defeat; now it's a victory. Do you understand? What belongs to America belongs to you. You are no longer defeated by the Revolutionary War. You are now the victor.

And you see, when you come into Christ, there is a change of position, and the victory that Jesus Christ won at the cross is a victory for you. Because you are in Christ,

and because there is a change of position, there's a change of possession. Everything that belongs to Jesus now belongs to you. We're heirs of God and joint heirs of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are made rich in Him. Oh, the riches that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ because of our relationship!

Folks, you just need to understand that when the Bible says, "We're heirs of God and joint heirs," a *joint heir* means, "share and share alike." There's a change of position, there's a change of possession, and there's a change of privilege. Can you imagine the entree that God the Son has for God the Father? Well, I have that same entree because I am in Christ, and through Christ, and in Christ, I have fellowship at the throne—I have throne rights.

I love to read about Abraham Lincoln. I think he was truly a great man. And I was reading a story that just really blessed me to think about it. Abraham Lincoln's son was named Todd. And when he was a little boy, his daddy was there in the cabinet room with all of the great high muckety-mucks of the government. And they were there pondering over the great problems at stake, and little Todd Lincoln, because he was the President's son, walked right past the guards, right past the secretaries, right up to his dad in the middle of the discussion, with a broken toy, and said, "Daddy, fix it." And the great Abraham Lincoln turned around in the middle of that discussion, and fixed that little boy's toy.

Now you see, of course, to that little boy, he was not just the President, he was Daddy, he was Papa. You know the Bible says, "*God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father*" (Galatians 4:6). That literally means, "Daddy, Father." And did you know that God never gets so busy hanging out the sun, the moon, and the stars—God never gets so busy regulating this universe—that He does not have time, dear friend, to fix your broken heart, your broken toy, your broken dreams; that He is your dear Father, because Jesus Christ is His Son, and you are in Christ.

You see, there's a change of privilege. We can come boldly to the throne of grace. Now listen, folks. You, in order to be ready for Jesus Christ to come, make certain of your relationship to God the Father through Jesus Christ. Are you saved? Do you know you're saved? How do you know you're saved? Not because you walked down the aisle and shook hands with some Baptist preacher, or some other kind of preacher, but oh, because you have God in your heart, because you are in Christ. And that is rooted, dear friend, in the grace of God.

II. You Need to Study and Develop a Personal Ministry

Now there's a second thing—not only should you be absolutely certain of your relationship with God, that is, to be saved; But secondly, here's a second principle: If you're going to be waiting for God's Son to come—if you're going to be ready when the

Lord Jesus Christ comes—you need to study and to develop a personal ministry. God has said, “*God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him*” (1 Corinthians 12:18). And God has given you a ministry to perform.

Now here’s what Paul said about it. Look in verses 2 and 3: “*We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father*” (1 Thessalonians 1:2–3). Now these people who were waiting for Jesus to come were not idly waiting. To wait for Jesus does not mean to sit down with your arms folded to wait. Jesus said, “*Occupy till I come*” (Luke 19:13). We are to occupy till He comes. And the word *occupy* does not mean, “to take up space.” It means, “to have an occupation.”

A. A Work of Faith

Now how is it described here? First of all, it is described as a work of faith. And I’m so glad that God put those two words in the same sentence: *work* and *faith*. Because, you see, some people have the idea that since we’re saved through grace by faith, we’re not supposed to work. Friend, listen. We are not saved by faith and works; that is heresy. But you are saved by a faith that works. Did you get that?

You say, “Well, I’m just trusting the Lord to save me. It’s all by grace, so I’m not going to do a blessed thing till Jesus gets here.” Well, I believe, when Jesus gets here, you’re going to be left behind. You see, Paul said, “You show me your faith without your works.” And James said, “I’ll show you my faith by my works.” We are saved through faith alone; but the faith that saves is never alone. Understand this:

*I cannot work my soul to save,
That work my Lord has done.
But I will work like any slave
For the love of God’s dear Son!*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Do you have a work of faith? I mean, is your life transformed? Do you say you believe in the Lord? You’re waiting for Jesus? Then there’s going to be a work of faith.

B. A Labor of Love

And then, he mentions, secondly, a labor of love. Now *labor* here talks about the price of that work. That is, he’s saying, “It’s not some cheap way, some easy way, some lazy way.” Listen, folks. Blood, sweat, and tears are what it’s all about—your labor of love. Listen. Just as faith leads to work, love leads to labor. Are you toiling for Jesus? Do you think, because it’s grace, you’re not supposed to labor—you’re not supposed to work? Oh, friend, there are three reasons why people work, why they labor: a slave does it because he has to; an employee does it because he needs to; but a Christian because

he loves to.

You know I wonder sometimes—I think I must be losing my mind. It seems, as I get older and older, I get busier and busier. I preach, as a minimum, 6 times a week, many times 10, 11 times a week. And some people ask Joyce, “What does your husband do for recreation—what’s his hobby?” She says, “Preaching.” That’s what she always says: “Preaching.” And you know I enjoy it. I don’t play golf. I don’t have anything against those who do, and I wish I could, I suppose. If I make six golf games, it’ll be my first half-a-dozen since I’ve been here, in 15 years.

I have not been fishing, since I’ve been here—in 15 years, not one time. Now that’s—I guess, that’s almost sin. I’m not bragging on that. I need to get busy, doing it. But what I’m saying is, you know I get some relaxation—I’m not trying to make you feel sorry for me, but what I’m saying is this—hey folks, I love what I do. I love what I’m doing. Now don’t you tell the finance committee, but I’d pay them for the privilege—it’s a labor of love—not that we *have* to, we *get* to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord!

C. A Patience of Hope

You see, look. It’s a work of faith—faith leads to work; it’s a labor of love—love leads to labor. And then, it is a patience of hope. Do you remember what I told you that word *patience* means? Look at it there. That word *patience* has the idea of endurance—and I want to talk more about that, tonight. And *hope*—that is an expectancy, a glad expectancy; not a wish, but a know-so. Something we know is going to happen, and the hope here is the second coming of Jesus Christ, that causes us to endure.

Friend, if you are waiting for Jesus to come, you had better occupy till He comes. And there are some of you who are Sunday-morning benchwarmers. You think you’ve done God a wild favor by coming to church on Sunday morning. You really do. He has a ministry for you. There ought to be—if you believe that Jesus is coming—there ought to be a work of faith; there ought to be a labor of love; there ought to be an endurance of hope. And you’re going to not only be saved, but you’re going to be serving, if you’re expecting Jesus to come at any moment.

Now let’s go on, and look, if you will, with me at another verse here, and that tells us what we’re to be doing. Notice verses 4 and 5: “*Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake*” (1 Thessalonians 1:4–5). Look at the word *knowing*—underscore it. Look at the word *assurance* in verse 5.

III. You Need to Have an Absolute Assurance

Now I want to give you a third principle. You need to have an absolute assurance and to rest in that assurance, if you're waiting for Jesus. *You don't need to be a doubting Christian; you need to be a shouting Christian.* You don't need to be blown about with every wind of doctrine. You ought to know what you believe, and why you believe it, and have a bedrock assurance. If not, you're not going to be ready when Jesus Christ gets here. And that assurance is rooted in three things.

A. The Eternal Will of God

First of all, it is rooted in the eternal will of God. Notice in verse 4: *"Knowing brethren beloved, your election of God"* (1 Thessalonians 1:4). "Adrian Rogers, do you believe in election?" Sure, I do. Why? Because the Bible teaches it. Do you know any better reason? We are elected of God. That means that God set His affection on us, God chose us, God selected us—we were chosen of Him. The Bible says, *"Before the foundation of the world..."* (Ephesians 1:4). You talk about old-time religion, that's pretty old-time, isn't it? I mean, before the foundation of the world, we are the elect of God.

Well, you say, "If God chose me before the foundation of the world, does that mean that I didn't have anything to do? Does that mean that some are predestined to go to Heaven, and some are predestined to go to Hell?" No. You say, "Well, I don't understand that." Well, that makes two of us. I want to tell you something, friend, the Bible also says, "whosoever will may come" (Revelation 22:17).

I like what Dwight L. Moody had to say about it. Dwight L. Moody said, "The elect are the *whosoever wills*, and the non-elect are the *whosoever won'ts*." If you are a *whosoever won't*, then you're not one of the elect; but if you want to be saved, you can be saved. When I get finished preaching, I'm going to stand up here and say, "If you want to be saved, come," and lead you to Christ. If you want to come, you can come—"Whosoever will may come." And Jesus said, *"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"* (John 6:37). Listen, friend. You better get some assurance; And that assurance, first of all, is rooted in the eternal will of God.

B. The Supernal Work of Christ

Secondly, it is rooted in the supernal work of Christ. Because, he goes on to say, in verse 5—he speaks of the gospel: *"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost"* (1 Thessalonians 1:5). What is the gospel? We mentioned it in the music—that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, that He was raised again the third day. And when Jesus hung on that cross, He bowed His head, and He said, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). That's one word in the Greek language—*tetelestai*—and it literally means, "paid in full." And actually, it's in the perfect tense, and what that means is, "there's some action in the past that took place in the past, and it

was completed in the past, but its work continues into the present.” That’s the work of salvation.

C. The Eternal Witness of the Spirit

And folks, I am resting today in the finished work of Christ. I can’t add anything to it. I wouldn’t add anything to it. But I know that God chose me—that’s the eternal will of God. I know that Christ died for me—that’s the supernal work of Christ. And then, there’s the eternal witness of the Spirit. That’s the third thing. Notice in verse 5: “*For our gospel came not unto you in word only,*”—thank God for the Word; he’s not putting down the Word, that’s the external evidence. But now watch—“*but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). Hallelujah!

I’ve got the written Word and the inner witness. It came not in Word only. It’d be wonderful if we just had the Word; But God, in order that we might have that assurance, has sent His Holy Spirit into my heart. And the Bible says that, “*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*” (Romans 8:16).

Now what is the witness of the Spirit? It’s not an emotional feeling. It may result in an emotional feeling, but it’s better than an emotional feeling. Emotions are fickle. You never say, “You know I’m saved, because I’m happy.” That’d be a tragic mistake; because, what are you going to do when you get unhappy? Are you going to think you’re no longer saved? No. Listen. Your assurance never grows out of your feelings; your feelings grow out of your assurance—but not vice versa.

You see, listen. If you depend upon feelings for assurance, the devil’s got you right where he wants you. *The most miserable man on earth is not a lost man. The most miserable man on earth may be a saved man, if he’s out of fellowship with God—more miserable than a lost man.* Well, what is this “much assurance,” then? What is this “not in word only, but in much assurance and power and of the Holy Ghost”? What is that? Friend, it’s so hard to explain, but those who have it know it. The Holy Spirit of God whispers *amen* to your spirit that you belong to Jesus—that’s it. “*He that hath the Son hath...the witness in himself*” (1 John 5:10–12). Do you have that?

You see, look—if you’re waiting for Jesus to come, you’d better be sure. I mean, you better know—you need to know something, you need to have that “much assurance” that is in the eternal will of God, the supernal work of Christ, and the internal witness of the Spirit. That’s the way to wait for His Son from Heaven.

IV. You Need to Get Ready and Prepare for Persecution

But not only that, but let’s continue to read here and find out what else that we need to know to get ready for our Lord to come. Not only do we need to be sure, but look also in verse 6: “*And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in*

much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost” (1 Thessalonians 1:6). You need, dear friend, to get ready and prepare for persecution to wait for Jesus—“much affliction.” Now when Paul wrote this was the beginning of a new dispensation, a new age—the gospel age. And because of that, at the beginning of that age, there was great persecution. Correspondingly, at the end of the age, there’s going to be great persecution. And as we get closer to the second coming of Jesus Christ, true Christians are going to be called by their names; they’re going to be persecuted—economically, psychologically.

Are you noticing in television, movies, even in the comics, how Christians are being made fun of today? Have you noticed that? Hey folks, can’t you tell the signs of the times? Can’t you tell what is happening? I mean, folks, and there’s going to be affliction, there’s going to be persecution. Now don’t let that bother you. Affliction, with what? What’s that other word? J-O-Y—joy. Jesus said, *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven”* (Matthew 5:11–12). I’d hate not to have the devil’s crowd mad at me at least some of the time.

Listen, folks. Has somebody said something against you for His sake? Now if it’s not for His sake, I’m not talking about that. And is it false? Sometimes, what they say about us is true, and it’s because we did it ourselves. But if it’s because of the stand you are taking for Christ, it means persecution. “They will revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for His name’s sake” (Matthew 5:11). Then, what should you do? Just go home and giggle all night.

Listen. Jesus didn’t say, “Just be happy.” Jesus said, “Be exceeding glad—exceeding glad” (Matthew 5:12). It is one of the evidences that you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, I can’t explain it. I never like to be persecuted. I have been—I don’t like it. I want everybody to say nice things about me, but they don’t. I can’t, they don’t. I don’t try to get criticized, but I do sometimes. And I don’t have a messiah complex about it—perhaps I need to be criticized more; But the point is, every time I have found myself suffering ridicule or abuse for the cause of Christ, I found joy just growing in my heart.

It’s the strangest thing how the joy just wells up. It comes with it. And friend, when it dawns on you, “Hey, this is happening to me because of the Word of God; this is happening to me because of Jesus; I—yes, for a moment—I am sharing the fellowship of His suffering.” What joy comes out of that? Friend, listen. You need not only to be saved, and not only to be serving, and not only to be sure, but friend, you need to be steadfast—steadfast if you’re waiting on Jesus. That’s what he’s saying here in verse 6. Just be steadfast.

V. You Need to Learn How to Share Your Faith

And then, look in verses 7 and 8, and that tells us that we need, in these last days, if

we're waiting on Jesus, to learn how to share our faith. So he says here, "*So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.*" I love that: "you were examples." Not only are we to be witnesses, we ought to be part of the evidence. Amen? We are examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia—"For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing" (1 Thessalonians 1:7–8).

What Paul is saying, he said, "When I got there with the gospel message, I was too late; you had already been there. Every place I went, I didn't need to speak; you had already been there, you'd already sounded out." The word *sounded out* is the idea of blowing a trumpet. They weren't tooting their own horn; they were giving a gospel message, they were sounding out the gospel of Jesus Christ, because they were waiting for God's Son from Heaven.

Question time—look up here. How many of you have been saved more than 5 years? Hold up your hands. Take them down. How many of you have been saved more than 10 years? Hold up your hand. Take them down. How many of you have been saved more than 20 years? Take them down. More than 30 years? Take them down. More than 40 years?

Now I'm not going to ask you a second question. I'm going to ask you, but I don't want you to lift tip your hand. How many of you have brought a soul to Jesus Christ? I don't mean, just witness—brought a soul to Jesus Christ. You listen to me. You think, "Well, if I just had the training, if I just had the seminary education." This church was not yet one-year-old, they were all baby Christians, and Paul said, "The gospel has just gone out all over." Folks, there's something wrong with us; you know it? I mean, we sit, soak, and sour on Sunday morning.

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is coming again? Well, the proof that you believe it is not primarily that you have your head in the clouds of prophecy, but that you have your feet in the pavement of soul winning. I mean, if I believe that somebody is coming to deliver "*us from the wrath to come*"—that's what verse 10 says, there's a wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10). I mean, after the Rapture of the Church, the Great Tribulation begins, and then Hell is going to have a holiday. And then, folks are going to be swept by great numbers into the pit—lost, separated from Christ, for eternity.

VI. You Need to Make a Clean Break with the World and with Every Idol in Your Life

How do you wait for Jesus? You be sharing, you be sharing, you tell others about the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, last of all, look, if you will, as we continue to read here in verse 9 of this same chapter: "*For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering*

in we had unto you”—that is, the people that you’re winning to Jesus are the testimonies of what happened to you, “how that you turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Now here’s the next thing if you would wait for Jesus and be ready for Jesus: you make a clean break with the world and with every idol in your life.

Well, you say, “We don’t have idols today.” You weren’t here a few Sundays ago when I preached on idolatry, then, to understand that an idol doesn’t have to be a stick or a stone that you bow down to. The Bible says, for example, that covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). The Bible speaks of some whose god is their belly (Philippians 3:19). The Bible speaks of others who are “*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*” (2 Timothy 3:4). Any thing you love more, any thing you serve more, any thing you fear more, anything you trust more, than God is an idol; okay? But now I want you to look at that verse very careful—verse 9: “how that you turned to God from idols.”

Now it does not say “how you turned from idols to God.” You say, “What’s the difference?” Friend, the difference is the difference between night and day; and the reason that some people never have victory is they’re trying to turn from idols to God. Don’t do it—turn to God from idols. What is the difference? Here’s the difference, and it is fundamental, dear friend. Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness. Do you see the difference? Christ is the way to holiness. You don’t have the power to overcome the idols in your life. I don’t have the power to overcome the idols in my life.

Conclusion

You know sometimes we preach the gospel, and the man out there, he wants to be saved, but he says, “I just can’t be saved; I can’t live like those folks down there. I know my life; I know my problems; I know my temptations; I know my weaknesses.” And so he’s afraid to come and give his heart to Jesus Christ, because he’s afraid he can’t live it. Well, friend, he’s right—he’s can’t live it. But there’s One who can, and if you’ll turn to Him, He’ll deliver you from those idols.

You turn to God from idols, and you clean up your life, and come to Jesus. You just come,

*Just as [you are], without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me...
O Lamb of God, I come [to thee], I come.*

—CHARLOTTE ELLIOTT

And friend, if you’ll do that, you’ll be saved. If you’ll be serving, you’ll be sure. Dear friend, if you will be steadfast. If you, my dear friend, will be sharing. And if you’ll be separated, you’ll be ready when Jesus comes, waiting for His Son from Heaven.

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found.
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*
—EDWARD MOTE

God's Cure for Ignorance

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 11, 1982

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Evidence That Affirms His Coming
 - A. The Incomparable Word of Our Lord
 - B. The Infallible Word of Our Lord
 - II. The Events That Will Accompany His Coming
 - A. The Majesty of His Revelation
 - B. The Miracle of Our Resurrection
 - C. The Mystery of the Rapture
 - D. The Marvel of Our Reunion
 - III. The Expectancy That Awaits His Coming
- Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles please and turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. We're going to have really, tonight, another Easter message. We'll take an interlude from our studies in the life of David, and I want us tonight to link the resurrection of Jesus with the second coming of Jesus. Christians do not need to be looking backward to a tomb. They need to be looking forward to a throne. And the scripture tonight has always been one of my favorite passages of Scripture. I suppose as a young preacher I preached on this text as much as any text in all of the Bible, because it has stirred me perhaps like few texts in all of the Bible—1 Thessalonians chapter 4. We are dealing tonight with “God's Cure for Ignorance.” So if you're ignorant, pay attention: “God's Cure for Ignorance.”

First Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 13: *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep,”*—now, when he uses the word *asleep* here, he's talking about the dead who die in the Lord. That's the Bible description for Christians who are dead. He calls them asleep—*“that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again...”*—that's Easter—*“if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in*

Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent—now, that word *prevent* is an old English word that literally means “go before”: “we shall not precede”—“*them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with him in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*” (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18)

Now, in verse 13, we see three problems that plague us in this day and age in which we live: “*I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren,*”—the first problem is ignorance—“*concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not,*”—and the second problem that we have is sorrow—“*even as others which have no hope*”—the third problem that we have in this world is hopelessness. Ignorance, sorrow, and hopelessness plague mankind, and will continue to plague mankind unless they understand the message that is given to us right here. And I want to say that there is a glorious answer in the Scripture that is before me in my hand tonight for man’s ignorance, for man’s sorrow, and for man’s hopelessness. And so, let’s pay attention to what God has to say about His cure for our ignorance.

Now, what kind of ignorance? Not ignorance concerning how to make money, not ignorance concerning world affairs, but ignorance concerning those who have already died and gone on, our loved ones who have passed from this world and who have slipped away from us and through the jaws of death and into the grace: what about them?

Now, these early Christians were perplexed. They had a problem. They knew that Jesus had promised to come again. They knew that Jesus had promised to set up His kingdom. They were anticipating His coming even in their day and in their age. And if they were anticipating His coming in their day and in their age, how much more should we be anticipating His coming in our day and in our age! Some people have the idea that there are certain prophecies that have to be fulfilled before Jesus Christ can come for His own. My dear friend, the Apostle Paul expected Christ in his day. He spoke. He said even “*we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord.*” (1 Thessalonians 4:15) He was expecting Christ in his day. That doesn’t mean that he was wrong or misinformed. That means that he was right and informed, because every Christian is to be living every moment in the expectancy of the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And so you don’t need to be looking for this prophecy or that prophecy to be fulfilled. You need to be looking for the Lord Jesus, because He can come tonight before I finish preaching this sermon. And these early saints were expecting Christ to come in their

lifetime. And they were expecting Him to set up the kingdom in their lifetime. But then they were perplexed and they had a problem. Since Christ had ascended and gone back to heaven, some of the saints had died. They were in the graves already. And they were afraid that they were going to miss it all, that they would miss the blessings of the return and the reign of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so, Paul is writing to put their hearts at rest concerning the loved ones who had already died. And so, with that as a background, that's the ignorance that Paul is writing to cure: the ignorance concerning the dead in Christ.

Now he then moves and links the resurrection of Jesus with the Second Coming of Christ and our resurrection. Now I want us to look at the Second Coming in the light of the resurrection of Jesus.

I. The Evidence That Affirms His Coming

First of all, I want us to see the evidence—the evidence that affirms His coming. The evidence that affirms His coming is two-fold. First of all, there is the incomparable work of our Lord. Secondly, there is the infallible word of our Lord.

A. The Incomparable Word of Our Lord

Now, what is the incomparable work of our Lord? Look, if you will, in verse 14. Paul says, *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:14) If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, Paul is saying we'll have no difficulty believing in the Second Coming and the resurrection of the saints. Do you believe that Jesus died and rose again? If you believe that Jesus died and rose again, you will have no difficulty whatever believing in the supernatural nature of the Second Coming.

Do you know why some people reject the Second Coming of Christ? Do you know why some people reject the resurrection of the saints; why they reject the Rapture, and why they reject all of that? They don't reject it because it is not taught in the Bible. They reject it because they cannot believe in that much supernaturalism. It seems so bizarre to them. It seems so otherworldly to them. It seems so supernatural that somehow they try to tone it down. Now, people, listen to me. If you believe that Jesus Christ literally, actually walked out of that grave after He was put to death, you won't have difficulty with any other miracle, right? That's Paul's argument right here. He's saying if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, *“even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”*

Death was conquered by the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus allowed Himself to be taken down from that cross a bloody corpse, to be laid in a tomb. And when Jesus did that, death waved his black banner, for death shrieked his horselaugh, and death felt himself

to be in control. And when Jesus Christ was laid in that tomb, the sighs could be heard among the tombs of the patriarchs, and a wail of woe went up from the domain of the dead, for Jesus Christ Himself was dead. And death lifted up his scepter as king without a rival.

But Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. Jesus allowed Himself to be taken into death's territory. Jesus allowed Himself to be taken captive by death that Jesus might lead captivity captive. (Ephesians 4:8) And Jesus went with the pale monarch of death into the silent darkness of the tomb. But then and there in that tomb on the third day, Jesus undermined death's strongholds. And Jesus lit the star of hope in the murky vaults of that tomb. And Jesus broke death's crown. And Jesus pulled out death's sting. And Jesus took the scepter from death's hand. And Jesus took the keys from death's girdle. And Jesus walked out of that tomb the victor. And that's what it's all about. And *"if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."* This is illustrated in the Old Testament in what we call the feast of the first fruits.

They had a marvelous ceremony in the Old Testament called the Feast of Firstfruits. And when there would be a harvest, as soon as the golden grain would start to ripen, they would go into the fields and they would get several sheaves of the first ripened golden grain, and they would bring it there to the temple. And the priest would take it and would wave it before the Lord. It was called a wave offering before the Lord. He just waved it before the Lord. And they had a feast, and they celebrated at that time, because they knew that that handful of golden grain was a pledge of the harvest that was to come. And then, later on, when the full harvest was ripe and all was gathered into the barn, they would come back to Jerusalem again for the feast of harvest time. And they would celebrate there in Jerusalem when the full harvest was gathered in.

Now we can understand what Paul is talking about when he says in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, *"Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."* (1 Corinthians 15:23) Jesus is the firstfruits of them that sleep. Jesus is that first wave offering before the Lord. And He has become the pattern for the rest of the resurrection. And just as they gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the full harvest, one day we're going to gather in glory and celebrate the full harvest: *"Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."*

B. The Infallible Word of Our Lord

And the first evidence that affirms His coming is the incomparable work of our Lord. He defeated death. He took captivity captive. He was raised from the dead and has become the firstfruits of them that sleep. But not only the incomparable work of our Lord, as we see it there in verse 14, but the infallible Word of our Lord, as we see it in

verse 15: *“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of our Lord shall not [precede] them which are asleep.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:15)

Paul bases what he’s saying on this: the Word of the Lord. Bible-believing Christians will ever affirm their faith in the blessed hope and the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, sometimes people will accuse you, if you preach on prophecy too much, of riding a hobbyhorse. But I want to submit to you that you can go into the average church across America and stay there one, two, three, four, five, and six years and never hear a sermon on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Did you know that one-third of the Bible affirms the Second Coming of Jesus Christ—one-third of the Bible? Perhaps one out of every three sermons, therefore, ought to be on the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The first and last promise in the New Testament deal with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The first and last promise in the Old Testament deal with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And so, Paul, when he wants to affirm the Second Coming of Jesus, he gives us two great evidences: the incomparable work of our Lord; the infallible word of our Lord.

II. The Events That Will Accompany His Coming

But not only do I want you to see the evidence that affirms His coming; I want you to see the events that will accompany His coming. What’s going to happen when He comes? Read with me now verses 16 and 17. Paul says, *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17)

Now, what are the events, therefore, that will accompany His coming?

A. The Majesty of His Revelation

Event number one: the majesty of His revelation—the majesty of His revelation. Notice what the Bible says in verse 16: *“the Lord himself”*—*“the Lord himself.”* The central figure in all of this is Jesus Christ Himself. One day, the Savior who was raised from the dead that Easter morning, who is now ascended, who is seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, is going to rise up from His throne and step down from the lofty heights of heaven’s splendor. He is going to descend to this earth, and we shall see our Lord as He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels: *“the Lord himself.”* Not death, not some event in history, not some angel, not some prophet: the Lord Himself. And the prayer of my heart, and I believe the prayer of your heart, are—ought to be—“Lord,

haste the day when our faith shall be sight; the clouds be rolled back as a scroll. The trumpet shall sound. Our Lord shall descend. Even so, it will be well with my soul.”

And so, dear friend, first of all, there is the majesty—the majesty of His revelation. Can you imagine seeing Him when He comes? I would love to have seen Him when He walked blue Galilee. I would love to have seen Him as He hung upon the cross. I would love to have seen Him as He appeared to the disciples after His resurrection. I shall not see Him in those ways except in my imagination, or perhaps faintly figured in the Living Pictures. But, dear friend, most of all, I want to see Him when He comes again—and I will. I will, and you will. *“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven.”* There is the majesty of His revelation.

B. The Miracle of Our Resurrection

Secondly, the second event is the miracle of our resurrection. Notice again in verse 16: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16)—not all of the dead, just the dead in Christ. There’s not a general resurrection. There’s a resurrection of the saved and a resurrection of the lost. There’s a first resurrection and a second resurrection. Revelation chapter 20, verse 6, says, *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.”* (Revelation 20:6) The first resurrection is for those who are blessed, for those who are holy, for those who are saved.

And so, when the Lord Jesus Christ descends, the Bible says He’s coming with a shout. Look, if you will, in verse 16: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.”* A shout will come from His lips. And the Lord of the dead and the Lord of the living will shout into the tombs of the multiplied who have known Him as Savior. And what will He shout? I don’t know what He shouts, but I think I know what He will shout. I think He will say the same thing that He said in John 11 as He stood there before the grave of Lazarus. I believe our Lord shall step down from the clouds of glory and from the throne of His majesty, and His voice will roll through the corridors of the dead, and Jesus will say, “Come forth!” And, dear friend, we are going to come forth. And up from the sea and from the land bodies resurrected and changed like unto His glorious body will come. They will spring up.

What a glorious day it will be! Those who have died in the desert and who have been wrapped in the winding sheets of sand will come forth. Those who have died and have gone to the ocean bottoms will come forth as the oceans swell and heave and give out of their watery depths the dead. Those multiplied thousands who have died on the battlefield will come forth as the battlefields give up their dead. And who knows but what graveyards will look like plowed fields as the dead come forth to meet our Lord in the

air. What a day that's going to be!

C. The Mystery of the Rapture

First of all, there will be majesty of His revelation: *"The Lord himself shall descend."* Then, there will be the miracle of our resurrection. And then, there will be the mystery of the Rapture. Look again, if you will, in verse 17: *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17)—the mystery of the Rapture. Paul calls the Rapture a mystery. He says in another place, *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."* (1 Corinthians 15:51)

Now, why do I call the Rapture a mystery? It's something that the Old Testament did not teach per se. It is something that you would never know except it be revealed to you by divine revelation. And so, Paul calls it a *mysterion* or a mystery. And what is going to happen is this: that Jesus is going to give a cry, and the dead are going to come forth, and then the voice of the archangel will cry. And what will the archangel say? I believe the archangel will shout, *"Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."* (Matthew 25:6) And in a flash, swiftly and irresistibly, all of those who are still living will be caught up to meet Him.

Suppose He were to come tonight, and Jesus would come, and He would shout, "Come forth!" and the dead would rise, and the archangel would shout, *"Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,"* and we'd be changed instantaneously, in a moment. And the word for moment there is in an atom. That is, the smallest particle of time, in the twinkling of an eye. That's the fastest movement of the human body. Just like that, we're going to be changed.

You say, "Brother Rogers, isn't that farfetched?" What about a resurrection from the dead? Do you believe that's farfetched? What about how Elijah went to heaven in a chariot of fire? What about how Enoch went to heaven, was translated that he should not see death? No, dear friend, there will be the mystery of the Rapture. We're going to be changed in a second, in a moment, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

*O Blessed Hope! Perhaps today—
A moment more, and then—away!
Caught up in clouds to be with Him,
Beyond the reach of conflicts grim,
Of disappointments, pain and tears.
O Blessed Hope! The rapture nears!*

—ANNIE LIND-WOODWORTH

And it does—it does!

D. The Marvel of Our Reunion

What's the next event that will accompany His coming? Not only will there be the majesty of His revelation; not only will there be the miracle of our resurrection; not only will there be the mystery of the Rapture; but there will be the marvel of our reunion. Look, if you will, in verse 17: *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds"—"together with them"*—with all of our loved ones, with all of the saints that have gone before. (1 Thessalonians 4:17) What a reunion there's going to be! How we're going to be gathered back together with our loved ones, our dead who die in the Lord! That's the reason Paul says in verse 13, *"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."* (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

Then, notice verse 17: *"We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."* (1 Thessalonians 4:17) When we go to meet Jesus, we're going to meet Him with all of our loved ones. We're going to have a homecoming week. That's that old gospel song: "We'll sing and shout and dance about. The Lamb will dry our tears. We'll have a grand homecoming week the first ten thousand years." Won't it be wonderful when we're gathered with all of the saints to meet the Lord in the air?

III. The Expectancy That Awaits His Coming

But now, the third and final thing I want you to notice tonight: I want you to notice not only the evidence that affirms His coming—that is, the incomparable work of our Lord, the infallible word of our Lord; I want you to notice not only the events that accompany His coming; but I want you to notice the expectancy that awaits His coming—the expectancy that awaits His coming. Read again verses 17 and 18. It says, *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."* (1 Thessalonians 4:17–18)

Look at that word *meet*. That word *meet* is an interesting word. It is a word that is used for an official greeting, especially when an ambassador who's gone to a foreign land comes home. For example, Secretary Haig has gone overseas to do some shuttle diplomacy between Great Britain and Argentina over the Falkland Islands. And when he comes home, he will go, doubtless, to see President Reagan. And President Reagan will go out to meet our Secretary of State. And that meeting will be an official meeting where he's coming to give a report of the things that he's done. That's the word; that's the sense in which the word *meet* is used here. You see, we are ambassadors for Christ. One of these days I'm going to meet my Lord, sooner perhaps than I realize, sooner perhaps than you realize. And when I meet Him, I'm going to have to give an

account of how I represented Him down here on this earth.

Jesus went away, and He said, “*Occupy till I come.*” (Luke 19:13) And, dear friend, we ought to be expecting His coming at any time. And we ought to be so living as so, when we meet our Lord, we will meet Him as an ambassador.

When I was a little boy I belonged to the Royal Ambassadors, and I’m so grateful for the Royal Ambassadors in our church and across our Southern Baptist Convention. And I learned that a royal ambassador is one that represents the person of a king in the court of another. The Apostle Paul said, “*We are ambassadors for Christ.*” (2 Corinthians 5:20)

*“Must I go, and empty handed,”
Must I meet my Savior so?
Not one soul with which to greet Him,
Must I empty handed go?*

—CHARLES C. LUTHER

You’re going to meet Jesus. And, my dear friend, not just will it be a thrill, not just a rapture, not just a blessedness, but we must report to our Lord, and we occupy till He comes.

And if you believe what I’m preaching tonight, the real belief is not the kind of notes that you put in your Bible. The real belief is not how much you say *amen*, nor how dewy-eyed you get when you sing about it. We need to get our heads out of the clouds of prophecy and onto the pavement of soul winning if we believe this. If we believe that Jesus Christ is coming, that Jesus Christ is coming at any moment, and that we must meet our Lord, and that we must give an account for the way that we lived, then how can we fail to tell others about Christ?

Ladies and gentlemen, you listen to me. We are not doing the job. You are not sharing your faith. We are getting so fat and sassy that as a church we’re lethargic. We are used to coming here on Sunday morning and seeing five, twenty, thirty, forty people unite with the church and singing “Victory in Jesus.” This church ought to see souls saved by the multiplied thousands—by the multiplied thousands! And nobody else can do it for you. I don’t care how faithfully you attend. I care not how liberally you give, how eloquently you teach, how beautifully you sing, how circumspectly you walk: if you’re not out there trying to bring souls to Jesus Christ, you’re not right with God. You’re going to meet Him.

And, oh, how we need to be expecting His coming! How we need to be praying, “O God, O God, give me a soul winner’s heart! Give me a soul winner’s heart!”

Conclusion

I don’t know when He’s going to come.

*It may be at morn, when the day is awaking,
When sunlight through darkness and shadow is breaking....*

*It may be at midday, it may be at twilight,
It may be, perchance, that the blackness of midnight
Will burst into light in the blaze of His glory,
When Jesus receives "His own."*

—H. L. TURNER

I don't know. But I know this: that there's no Scripture yet to be fulfilled before He comes. And Paul in his day expected the Lord to come. Do you know Him? Are you saved? Should He come tonight, would you be ready?

In the Twinkling of an Eye

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 12, 1999

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:17

Outline

Introduction

I. What?

A. Four Instances in which the Word *Rapture* is Used in the Bible

1. Acts 8:39: Caught Away Speedily
2. John 6:15: Seized by Force and Taken Away
3. 1 Corinthians 12:1–2: Carried Away
4. Acts 23:10: Rescued from Danger

B. How are We Assured?

1. By the Saving Work of Our Lord
2. By the Sure Word of Our Lord

II. Who?

III. When?

A. The Signs of the Times

B. The Sounds of the Times

1. The Voice of the Lord
2. The Voice of the Archangel
3. The Trump of God

IV. Why?

A. Rescue

B. Reunion

C. Reception

V. Where?

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word, and turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4? And, in a moment, we’re going to begin reading a very familiar passage if you know anything about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We’re going to begin in verse 13.

Now, the FBI is worried about what I’m preaching about, this morning—seriously, seriously. They’re worried, because they believe, as we approach this time, that many

crazies, many cultists, many survivalists, many what they call “the black helicopter groups” are going to come out of the woodwork. And so, they ask the Attorney General Janet Reno if she would give a description of a cult—C-U-L-T. And, here’s what Attorney General Janet Reno said—listen to it, because her definition, very frankly, is alarming—and this, evidently, is what she said on *60 Minutes*, June the 26th, 1994—listen—listen—to this definition: “A *cultist* is one who has a strong belief in the Bible and the Second Coming of Christ, who frequently attends Bible study, who has a level of giving to a Christian cause, who homeschools their children, who has accumulated survival foods and has a strong belief in the Second Amendment, and who distrusts big government.” Folks, apart from the accumulation of survival food, I qualify for all of those. I mean, count me in! *I may be a nut, but I’m fastened to a good bolt: the Lord Jesus Christ*. Well, you know, people think we are crazy—many people think we are literally crazy—if we are expecting Jesus Christ to come again.

Now, the early Christians were concerned, also. The Christians in Thessalonica were concerned, because Jesus was here; He lived and taught; He ascended; and He said, “I’m coming again.” And, they were expecting Him in that day, at any moment. But, in the meanwhile, some of the church members, some of their brothers and sisters in Christ, and family members, had died and were buried. And, they were saying, “Are they going to miss the Kingdom? Where will they be when Jesus comes again?” Because they were expecting Jesus in their lifetime.

And so, the Apostle Paul is writing to the church at Thessalonica to answer this question, and here’s what he says—now, look at it—chapter 4, beginning in verse 14: “*But I would not have you to be ignorant*”—underscore the word *ignorant*—“*brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not*”—underscore the word *sorrow*—“*even as others which have no hope*” (1 Thessalonians 14:13)—underscore “no hope.” Three great enemies there: ignorance, sorrow, and hopelessness. That’s what happens to the person who doesn’t understand what I’m going to be talking about this morning. They are living with ignorance; they’re filled with sorrow. And, they are living lives of despair, and they have no hope. And so, Paul is writing to answer this question: “What has happened to our dead who died, and will they not be here, perhaps, when Jesus comes again?”

Well, Paul is talking, here, about something that we’re going to call “the Rapture of the Church.” And, the Rapture’s going to take place in the twinkling of an eye. I heard on the radio the other day... It was significant. As I was thinking about this message, I heard this. But, whoever makes these statistics, I don’t know. But, one person said that the average person blinks his eyes 20,000 times a day. So, 20,000 episodes in a day, Jesus may come—in the twinkling of an eye.

Now, I want you to get some things down, as we try to answer these questions about

the Rapture. We're going to ask some questions and then answer them, and we're going to ask all of the questions under the heading of W's.

I. What?

First of all, let's think a little bit about *what*? What is the sacred mystery of Resurrection and Rapture? Now look, if you will, in verse 16 again of this same chapter here in verse 16: *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). So, that tells us right away that the central figure is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus is going to step from His throne in the Glory at the right hand of the Father and from the lofty heights of Heaven. Jesus is going to descend; He's going to make His way back to this earth.

And, when he comes back to this earth, the Bible says here that He is coming with a shout. Do you see that? *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Now, that's very interesting—verse 16—because there's going to be a shout that will raise the dead. At His command, they're going to come forth from the sea and from the land. Those who have died and are buried are going to be raised. And, the oceans are going to heave and give up the dead that are in them. And, the winding sheets of desert sand will give up the dead that are in them, and battlefields will give up the dead that have been buried there. And, graveyards may look like plowed fields as Jesus gives a shout, and those who are dead are going to be raised. What a glorious day that will be!

And then, living saints are going to be transformed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Look again in verse 17, if you will, of this same chapter: and the Bible says, *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). That tells us that the Apostle Paul was expecting to be alive when Jesus Christ comes again, because he included himself. Now, these words "caught up" we call "the Rapture." The word *rapture* comes from the Latin word *raptō* and the Greek word *herpaso*—both mean the same thing. It means "a catching away." We're going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air—changed and transformed, and then caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Some people say that the word *rapture* is not found in the Bible. Well, that's true; the English word *rapture* is not found in the Bible. The English word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible. The English word *missions* is not found in the Bible. But, I can guarantee you that Trinity, missions, and the Rapture are taught in the Bible.

A. Four Instances in which the Word *Rapture* is Used in the Bible

Let me give you four instances—and this is for you Bible students; I want you to write this down now—four instances where this word is used in other places. And, that will

help you to understand why we call it “the Rapture.”

1. Acts 8:39: Caught Away Speedily

For example, in Acts chapter 8 and verse 39: Phillip had just baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, and the Bible says, *“And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Phillip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing”* (Acts 8:39). He caught him away. What happened to Phillip? He’s just gone. He just is suddenly vacant from that place. And so, the word rapture, as it is used here, means “to catch away speedily.” One of these days, as Steve sang for us, we’re going to be leaving here in the twinkling of an eye.

2. John 6:15: Seized by Force and Taken Away

Here’s another place where this word is used—in John chapter 6 and verse 15: *“when Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone”* (John 6:15). Now, here it says they were coming to Jesus; they’re going to seize Him, and take Him by force, and make Him a king. And, the words “to seize” and “take by force”—or, “to take by force”—are the same words that are translated “caught up” in other places. And so, one of these days, not only are we going to be caught away speedily, but we’re going to be seized by force and taken away. What does that mean? It means that not the grave, nor gravity, will be able to hold us. We’re going to be caught away. Nothing can keep that from happening.

3. 1 Corinthians 12:1–2: Carried Away

Now, here’s the third place where that word is used—1 Corinthians 12, verse 1: *“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols”* (1 Corinthians 12:1–2). And there, he uses the same word, which means “to carry away.” So, what is happening is this: that we are going to be caught away speedily; we’re going to be caught away by force, and we’re going to be carried away—that is, transported from one place and moved to a new place. This world is not our home. We’re going to be carried away.

4. Acts 23:10: Rescued from Danger

And then, here’s another place where this same word is used: in Acts chapter 23 and verse 10. The Bible tells about Paul, who was in danger. There were some people who wanted to assassinate Paul, and Acts 23, verse 10 says, *“And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and bring him into the castle”* (Acts 23:10). The phrase there—“take him by force”—is the same word that we are translating or calling “the Rapture,” and it means “to rescue from danger.” Paul is in great danger. And, they came, and took him by force, and

delivered him. And, when the Rapture comes, we are going to be taken by force, raptured, and moved to a new place to be delivered from danger.

Now, Paul calls this a “mystery,” and here’s where we get the sermon title from: 1 Corinthians 15—put this in your margin—verses 51 and 52: Paul says, *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment”* (1 Corinthians 15:51–52). And, the word *moment* is the word that we get our word *atom* from, because these people called an “atom” the most indivisible piece that they knew of. Now, they had no knowledge of nuclear physics, but they were saying, “This is the most indivisible thing that our language can describe.” In a moment, in an atom, in the twinkling of an eye, this is going to happen. *“The dead in Christ [are going to] rise first”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16); and then, we which remain are going to be seized. We’re going to be caught up by force; we’re going to be moved to a new place. And, it’s going to happen quickly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, just as quickly as you can bat your eyelash. It’s going to be over; we’re going to be leaving here. We are going up, and we are going to Glory.

When I was a little boy, near our house there used to be a scrapyard. And, there were all kinds of metal in that scrapyard, and there would be a great magnet on a crane, an electro-magnet, that would move that steel and that iron from one place to another. If you were to take one of those great magnets and sweep it across the ground—and let’s say there’s all kind of metal there, in the ground: there’s lead, and zinc, and iron, and silver, and aluminum, and steel; all of these things there in the ground, some under the ground and some on top of the ground—if you were to pass that great magnet all over that, not every piece of metal would rise. Only that which was made of iron would rise. Why is that? Because, the iron has the same nature as the magnet; and if you have the same nature as Jesus Christ, when He comes again, you’re the one going up, whether you’re beneath the ground or whether you’re on top of the ground. You’re the one going up. *If you’ve been Heaven-born, you will be Heaven-bound*, if you share the nature of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

B. How are We Assured?

“Now Pastor, that sounds so fantastic; it sounds so otherworldly, and it sounds so superstitious. What is your assurance of these things?” Well, here’s my assurance: look, if you will, in verses 14 and 15. Paul realized that there were some who would have some questions, so he says—now, look; look—in verse 14: *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again”*—do you believe that? Hey, if you believe that Jesus died and rose again, folks, you don’t have any trouble with the supernatural. Now, if you have trouble with the Rapture, why would you not have trouble with the Resurrection? See—*“if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so”*—“in like manner”—*“them also which*

sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

1. By the Saving Work of Our Lord

So, how are we assured? First of all, by the saving work of our Lord. Jesus died and rose again. The gospel itself is supernatural, and God is not finished. If God raised Jesus from the dead, then He's going to raise us from the dead. You see, it all hangs together. Jesus Christ—this same Jesus who came the first time, literally, and rose from the dead—is coming back the second time, literally—the same Jesus that was born of a virgin, the same Jesus that walked on the water, the same Jesus that fed the 5,000. Jesus is coming back again, and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is necessary to fulfill the purpose of God. *The Incarnation without the carnation would be like height without depth and east without west.* It takes it all to make it happen. And, our salvation without our glorification is no salvation at all. His resurrection is the pledge of our resurrection. Now, that's the first proof that all of this happened: Jesus has already come out of that grave.

2. By the Sure Word of Our Lord

Now, not only the saving work of our Lord, but the sure Word of our Lord. Look, if you will, in verse 15: *"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Now, that's what makes the difference. We have all kinds of soothsayers, prognosticators, New Age astrologers; we have all kinds of self-styled prophets, and mediums, and seers, and people who are saying what's going to happen in the future, but they don't know. Not a' one of them knows. The devil himself doesn't know. As a matter of fact, the devil's a knucklehead; he really is—I mean, if he ever thought that his plans could succeed. He doesn't know the future. Only God knows the future, and that's the reason the Apostle Paul says, *"This we say unto you by the word of the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:15). One-third of the Bible is about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The first and last promise in both the Old Testament and the New Testament deal with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. So, the saving work of our Lord and the sure Word of our Lord tell us this is true.

So, that's the *what*.

II. Who?

Now, the *who*: Let's move to the second thing: Who is going to be in this? Well, there is a select multitude of the Savior and the saints. Look again in verses 16 and 17: *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God"*—now, watch this—*"and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

Now, this is a select multitude of the Savior and the saints. Don't get the idea that there is a general resurrection. No, there's a first and second resurrection. It is only the

dead in Christ that will be raised at the Rapture. Put in your margin “Revelation chapter 20, verses 5 and 6”: *“But the rest of the dead lived not again until a thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”* (Revelation 20:5–6). Now, these verses make it very clear that it is the dead in Christ who are going to be raised—those in the first of the resurrections. By the way, there are only two ways to die: either you die in Christ, or you die out of Christ. The dead in Christ are gonna be raised. Now, if you were born twice, you’ll only die once. If you’re born only once, you’re gonna die twice. And, if you die twice, the time will come when you wish you hadn’t been born at all.

Now, we’re talking about the dead in Christ, and just as there is a general resurrection, there is not a general resurrection—rather, there is not going to be a general rapture. Not everybody’s going to be caught up; not all the people on the face of the Earth are going to be caught up to meet the Lord—only we which remain (talking to the Church). When he said, “we,” he’s including the saints at Thessalonica. He said, “We which remain are going to be transformed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air, if we are living” (1 Thessalonians 4:15). In the song “In the Twinkling of an Eye,” this was referred to.

Put these verses in your margin. Luke chapter 17, verses 34 and following: *“I tell you”—now, this is Jesus—“I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together”* (Luke 17:34–37). And so, if Jesus comes on one side of the world, and it’s midnight—and it may be at midnight—there are people in the bed: one here, and one here—one’s gone; one’s left. Or, it may be on the other side of the world at daylight. Two people are in the field: one taken; the other left. The other airplane pilot may go. The star quarterback under the ball may go. Who knows where you will be at that moment and whether you will go or be left. But, there is a select multitude. Not everybody is going, and you need to be going, that you are not left behind.

III. When?

Now, here’s the third thing: When? We’ve talked about *what*; we’ve talked about *who*. Let’s talk about *when*. *When* is a sudden moment that is close and certain. Now, I say it is a sudden moment—a sudden moment—in the twinkling of the eye. You don’t know, and I don’t know. I do know it is close. You say, “Pastor, how can you tell that it is

close?” It may be 50 years; it is still close. It may be 1,000 years; it is still close. What I’m trying to say, and what I said last Sunday, is *we’re always living on the edge of eternity*. The Bible says, “*The time is at hand*” (Revelation 22:10). The Second Coming of Jesus is always close, and it is always certain. Paul was expecting Christ in his day. Was he wrong? No, he was right.

Let me give you some scriptures. Jot them down; don’t try to turn to them. Matthew 24, verse 36: Jesus said, “*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, but my Father only*” (Matthew 24:36). And, if any body gives you a date as to when Jesus Christ is coming again, he’s a liar; he doesn’t know. You can’t set a date. If I were God, and some man happened to guess the right date, I’d change it. “*That day and that hour no man knows*” (Matthew 24:36).

Put this scripture down—Matthew 24, verse 38: “*For as the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark... so shall also the coming of the Son of man be*” (Matthew 24:38–39). Now, that’s very interesting. He says, “just like the days of Noah.” Some people have the idea that the Church is going to be in the Great Tribulation when the Rapture comes, or have gone through the Great Tribulation. No! That’s not what this scripture says. They’re eating. They’re drinking. They’re marrying. They’re giving in marriage. The daily round of life is going. And then, suddenly, *just like that*, Jesus comes. That’s the reason He says in Matthew 24, verse 42: “*Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come*” (Matthew 24:42).

Matthew 24, verse 44: “*Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh*”—not in the time that you figured it out, but in the time when you haven’t figured Him out (Matthew 24:44). I always thought He’d come on Monday. I can’t think at all on Monday. “*In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh*” (Matthew 24:44).

First Corinthians 15, verses 51 and 52 (we’ve already given you this): “*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep*”—that is, not everybody’s going to die; that’s a metaphor, a euphemism, for a Christian who has died. The Bible doesn’t call it “death”; it calls it “sleep”—“*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump*” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52). Now, remember that you bat your eyes 20,000 times a day; and so, today, you’ve got 20,000 episodes when Jesus may come.

A. The Signs of the Times

Well, somebody says, “Well, Pastor, what about the signs of the times? Don’t the signs of the times prove that Jesus is coming?” No—no. Friend, we don’t have to have the signs. Don’t get the idea that there’s something we’re waiting for. “Well, do the signs of

the times tell us that we may be nearer to the Second Coming of Jesus?" Yes. "Well, is there a contradiction?" Not really. You know what's going to happen?

Pretty soon, you're going to go to the stores. You'll go to the mall. And, you're gonna find out in the mall, they're gonna start putting up Christmas decorations. Now, when they start putting up Christmas decorations in the mall, does that mean Christmas is coming? No, it means Thanksgiving is coming. It may mean Halloween is coming. But, what I mean is that these things, which really are supposed to be pointing toward Christmas, they can tell us something about some other times, also. And, what I'm saying is this: that there are signs, but they don't prove to us that Jesus is coming today or tomorrow. You should always be ready for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

B. The Sounds of the Times

The signs may give you some extra special encouragement. But, not only are there gonna be some signs; there are going to be some sounds. *"For the Lord himself shall descend...with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

1. The Voice of the Lord

Now, first of all, the shout is the Lord's voice, Himself. Jesus comes with a shout. And, remember Jesus, in John 11, standing before the grave of Lazarus and saying, *"Lazarus, come forth"* (John 11:43)? And, Lazarus came forth. When Jesus descends from His lofty heights in the Glory, and He is there in the clouds, He'll give a shout, and the whole Church will come forth. *"The dead in Christ shall rise first"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). And so, the shout is pointed primarily to the Church.

2. The Voice of the Archangel

And then, there's the voice of the archangel. Who is the archangel? That's the chief angel. He's in charge of Heaven's armies. And, why does he speak? He's not speaking primarily to the Church, but he's speaking to Israel, because as I'm going to preach tonight, God has called a time-out for Israel. And, after the Church is taken out, then God begins to move again with the nation Israel. He's moving with individual Jews, but He'll begin to move with the nation Israel. And so, the archangel now is speaking to martial the angels of the world for the Great Tribulation that is going to come on the Earth that both Jew and Gentile will endure. So, while the Lord speaks to the Church, the archangel is speaking primarily to the angels that will be dealing in the world.

3. The Trump of God

And then the trump of God, which deals primarily with Israel. He, again, begins to assemble Israel for these last days, and Numbers 10, verses 9 and 10 say: *"And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets"* (Numbers 10:9).

And so, here, our Lord is coming with the voice of the archangel, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.

IV. Why?

Now, let's move to the next and the fourth question: Why? Why? We've talked about *who*, and we've talked about *when*. And, let's talk a little bit about *why*. Well, the *why*—it is a strategic motive of rescue, of reunion, and reception. Look in verse 7, if you will, of this same chapter. Well, let's just...verse 17, rather: *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Rescue, reunion, and reception.

A. Rescue

You see, first of all, it's rescue. The Great Tribulation is ready to begin, but before God allows the Great Tribulation here upon this earth, He takes the Church out. We're going to be talking about this more, and especially on Sunday nights, of why we believe the Rapture will come before the Great Tribulation.

But, let me give you some verses. You're in 1 Thessalonians; look in chapter 1, verses 9 and 10: *"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come"*—*"Jesus [has] delivered us from the wrath to come"* (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10). There is wrath coming, but He has delivered us.

And then, go over to chapter 5—1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 9: *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9). The Church is not appointed to wrath; and so, when God declares war on this world, He's going to call His nationals home before He declares war.

B. Reunion

And so, the *why*, first of all, is rescue, and then, reunion. Verse 17 says we're going to be caught up together (1 Thessalonians 4:17). These people were wondering about the dead who had died and had they lost them forever. And, Paul says, "Oh, no—oh, no—we're going to be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air." And, the songwriter says:

*We'll sing and shout and dance about,
The Lamb will dry our tears,
We'll have a grand homecoming week,
The first ten thousand years.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

C. Reception

And then, it will be reception. Jesus is coming to receive us to Himself. Remember John 14: *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself”* (John 14:3). I loved the call to worship this morning: “It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus” (Esther Kerr Rusthoi).

V. Where?

Now, fifthly, the *where*. Where is this going to be? Well, it’s going to be in the air. Look at it again: *“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air”* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). This is not truly the Second Coming of Jesus; this is the Rapture. At the Second Coming, His feet are going to touch upon the Mount of Olives. That’s when He comes to reveal Himself in glory. But, this is secret; this is secluded. It is, friend, a secluded meeting of the Bridegroom and the bride. What do a bridegroom and a bride want? They want seclusion; they want to be left alone for a period to consummate the marriage.

And, in an Oriental wedding, the groom would take the initiative. He would go to the father’s house and negotiate for the bride, pay a price for the bride. They would call that “the betrothal.” They would have a cup of wine over which a betrothal blessing had been given, and they would drink from that cup together. And then, he would go away back to his father’s house to prepare a place for her, and she would stay there and begin to prepare her trousseau and her wedding gown. And then, at a particular time known to him, not known to her—she didn’t have the joy and the pleasure of setting the date; the groom set the date in conjunction with his father—he would come. He would come with a torchlight parade, many times, and there would be one who would go before him and would shout, “Behold, the bridegroom comes.” And, she would gather her things and be ready. It was supposed to be exciting. I think modern ladies would like a little more time in the beauty shop, but this is the way it was. And, they would come with torch lights if it were at nighttime—and sometimes it would be at midnight—and take her away. And then, she would be caught up in his arms, and they would go away to a honeymoon suite for the consummation of the marriage. Now, that’s what’s going to happen. We’re the bride of Christ, and we’re going to be in a secluded place with our Lord. I love Song of Solomon chapter 2 and verse 10. It just reminds me of this time: *“My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away”* (Song of Solomon 2:10).

Conclusion

Well, that’s what’s going to happen in the twinkling of an eye. Now, I have found myself so rushing through my material that, very frankly, I wish I had another hour to talk on

each of these points. But, let me just say this, folks: suddenly, perhaps before we have the final benediction, there will be the shout, there will be the voice of the archangel, and there will be the trump of God.

There's a man named Steven Covey, who's written a book; and, I certainly don't buy into his theology, but he has a great illustration in that book I want to share with you. And, I may not have all the details right, but I know I have the thought right. He said that a certain professor had his students in college, and he had a great big wide-mouth jar. And, in that jar, he had some large rocks, and he asked his students this question: "Because the rocks came all the way up to the top, is this jar filled?" Well, one or two students lifted their hands and said, "Yes, the jar is filled." He said, "No, the jar is not filled." And then, he took some gravel and put gravel on top of the jar, and the gravel began to fill in all the places where all those big rocks were. He shook it down good, like that—smoothed it off. He said, "Now—now—is the jar filled?" They said, "Yes, Professor; now, it's filled." He said, "No, it's not." And, he took some fine sand, and he began to put it on top of the gravel and shake it down; and, it filled every little place there. And, he said, "Now, is the jar filled?" They were afraid to answer now. A few of them said, "Yes, now it is filled." He said, "No, it's not filled yet." And then, he took some water and poured the water in the fine sand, and the water began to seep into every little crevice and so forth, and floated on the top. And, he said, "Now, is the jar filled?" "Well," they said, "You tell us, Professor." He said, "Yes, the jar is filled." He said, "What is the lesson?" And, they said, "Well, Professor, the lesson is this: that there'll come a time in your life that it will become so filled and so saturated you can't put anything else in." He said, "No, that's not the lesson. Here's the lesson: if I had not put the big rocks in first, I would never be able to put them in—that's the lesson. If I had not put the big rocks in first..."

Now, listen to me: there are some of you who've allowed your life to be filled with gravel, and sand, and water. You know what the big rocks are? Salvation, being right with God, ready for Jesus to come again. Have you been so busy with all of these other things? See, we need to learn of His coming. We need to live for His coming. We need to long for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Now, if your life is filled with gravel, and sand, and water, but you've left out the Rock of Ages, why don't you give Jesus, right now, just empty that jar, right now—right now—and put Jesus in?

Would you pray a prayer like this? "Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for me. I believe You're the Son of God. I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now, like a little child, once and for all, I trust You as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life; forgive my sin; and save me,

Jesus.” Friend, pray that from your heart. Young man, young lady, little boy, little girl, pray that: “Lord Jesus, come into my life. Come in, now. Forgive my sin; cleanse me; and save me. I trust You only and You always to do it. And, Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Now, look up here. We’re going to sing an invitational hymn. The ministers of our church are going to stand at the head of these aisles, all the way across the front. And, as we sing, those of you who prayed that prayer, or who want to pray that prayer and say, “Lord Jesus, today, come into my heart and into my life”—if you prayed that, if you mean it, I want you to leave your seat and come forward. And, I want you to tell the minister—just say this: “I’m trusting Jesus—I’m trusting Jesus.” What’ll happen? We’ll rejoice. We’ll give you some scripture to stand on; we’ll answer any questions that we can answer, and we’ll seal it in prayer. And, you can go away saying, “Yes, I’ve trusted Christ in my heart and openly and publicly acknowledged Him as my Lord and Savior.” If you’re in the balcony—and I hope many of you in the balcony will say, “Yes” to Him publicly—the minister over there, standing under that banner over there, to my right, that says, “Redeemer,” and the one to my left that says, “Messiah.” Don’t look to see what any one else is going to do. You come if no one else comes. You come if all of us come.

Next, if you’re already saved and you know that you’re saved—you know it—and yet you don’t have a local church home where you’re active, I want to invite you to come and place your membership here, if you believe as we believe and want to be a growing Christian. You come down any of these aisles and say to the minister, “I want to place my membership here,” and he’ll tell you how you may become a member of this wonderful church.

Some are coming, saying, “I want to place my membership here.” Many are coming today, saying, “I’m trusting Jesus.” No one will leave unless it is an emergency. All of us will be praying and singing. Let’s stand together. You step out and come, right now. You come. “Lord, I believe. Lord, I receive.”

In the Twinkling of an Eye

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 12, 1999

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:17

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Introduction

Take God's Word; find 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. In a moment, we begin reading in verse 13. Now, we're thinking about living on the edge of eternity, the soon coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's not only the Church that is interested in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ; the FBI is interested in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, because they think that many who believe in the Second Coming of Jesus, as we believe in the Second Coming of Jesus, are dangerous. They think that we're part of the little thick fringe, and they've said to the FBI, "Keep your eye on those kind of people. They're nuts." *Well, I may be a nut, but I'm fastened to a good bolt: His name is*

Jesus.

Well, the Christians at Thessalonica were having some problems, and here were the problems: Jesus had come. He had taught. He had ascended, and He said, “I’m coming again.” They took Him literally; they were expecting Him to come, and they were expecting Him to come in their lifetime. But, in the meanwhile, some of the members of that flock had died; and so, they were perplexed, and disturbed, and worried. And, they were saying, “But, wait a minute—where’s Jesus? Did our loved ones miss His coming? Will they miss their part in the Kingdom?”

And so, Paul is writing to answer their questions, and to relieve their worries, and to give them comfort. So, it begins in verse 13—chapter 4 and verse 13: *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren”—*now, just underscore the word *ignorant*—*“I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not”—*underscore *sorrow not*—*“even as others which have no hope”—*underscore *no hope* (1 Thessalonians 4:13). They have three major problems that people have who don’t understand the Second Coming of Jesus Christ: number one, ignorance; number two, sorrow; and number three, hopelessness. And so, Paul is writing to alleviate these problems, and to give encouragement, and to give comfort; and so, he tells them this blessed truth, this wonderful truth, of the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let’s read it all: *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent”—*that’s Old English for *precede*—*“them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words”* (1 Thessalonians 4:14–18). Now, we’re going to ask and answer some questions today concerning the Rapture of the Church that will take place in the twinkling of an eye. The title of our message is “In the Twinkling of an Eye,” and we’ll let all these questions begin with the letter “W” so we can help keep them in track and understand them.

I. What?

First of all, the word *what*. What do we mean when we say the word *rapture*? Well, the word *what* is the sacred mystery between resurrection and rapture. You’ll find that in verses 16 and 17. It starts out in verse 16: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). The central figure in all of this, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And, one day, Jesus is going to stand up from His lofty throne in

the Glory and make His way, stepping on the clouds, back to this Earth. He's gonna make His descent back to this Earth, or back toward this Earth. And then, when He does, a shout will come from His lips, and those who know Him are going to hear Him say, "Come forth." And, both the living and the dead will rise to meet the Lord in the air. And, at His command, those dead in the sea will come forth, as the sea heaves her bosom and gives up the dead that are there. And, those wrapped in the winding sands of the desert will give up their dead there. Battlefields will give up the dead that are in the battlefields. And, graveyards may look like plowed fields, as Jesus gives a shout and the dead rise to meet Him in the air. What a glorious day that will be, as the dead rise first!

And then, next after this resurrection is going to come the Rapture. Now, what the word *rapture* means is that those of us who are alive when Jesus comes—and, we may be alive—are going to be transformed in the twinkling of an eye. Notice in verse 17: *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Now, we call that "the Rapture." Some people say, "Well, the word *rapture*'s not found in the Bible. That is true. It is not found in the Bible under the heading *rapture*. The word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible. The word *missions* is not found in the Bible, but those things are taught in the Bible. The word here, *herpazo*, is the Greek word; the Latin word *rpto* is the word we get our word *rapture* from, and it simply means "to be caught away quickly."

Let me give you four places in the Bible where the word *rapture* is used, where the word *herpazo* is used, apart from the Second Coming of Jesus, to give you some idea why Paul chose this word.

First of all, you might find it in Acts chapter 8, verse 39—put it down: *"And when they were come out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Phillip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing"* (Acts 8:39). Now, Phillip was a preacher. He preached the gospel to a eunuch from Ethiopia. And, after he had baptized him, the Bible says God's Spirit just took Philip; Philip vanished. The Lord just took him away, caught him away. So, what does the word *rapture* mean? Well, it means "to catch away speedily." That's what's going to happen to us. As the song "In the Twinkling of an Eye" said, "Brother, I'll be gone."

And, not only does it mean "to catch away speedily," but it also means "to seize by force." John chapter 6 and verse 15: *"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone"* (John 6:15). They came to take Jesus, to seize Him and take Him by force. Now, the Rapture's gonna take us by force. What I mean by that is that neither grave nor gravity can hold us down. No, we're going at what mighty power this Rapture will have.

Now, here again, it's used in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 1: *"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols"* (1 Corinthians 12:1–2). Now there, it's used in a negative sense—that, as Gentiles, before we were saved, we were just led away, transported into idol worship. Well, the point is that the word *herpazo*, the same word that's used here for "caught up," is used to mean "to carry away." One of these days, Jesus is going to come and carry us away. We're gonna be taken home; we're gonna be taken to a new place.

Then, here's the last time this word is used that I want to use this morning. It's found in Acts chapter 23 and verse 10. There were some people who wanted to do Paul harm, and there were those who came to rescue him. And, here's what it says: *"And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them"* (Acts 23:10)—that is, "to rescue him."

So, there you have an idea of what the Rapture really means. It means "to catch away speedily." It has the idea of seizing by force. It has the idea of being taken from one place to another place. It has the idea of being delivered from danger. All of these words are the same word that is translated here in 1 Thessalonians 4, which means that we are caught away to meet the Lord in the air.

Now, this Rapture is a mystery; that's the reason why I called it a "mystery." Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 51: *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed"* (1 Corinthians 15:51–52). So, it is a mystery.

Now, what is a mystery in the Bible? The word *mystery* means "something that has been hidden that is now revealed." The Old Testament prophets did not understand the Rapture. The Rapture is a message that deals specifically with the Church. And so, that's the very first thing I want to do, as we answer this question: I want to talk to you about the sacred mystery of the Resurrection and the Rapture.

When I was a boy, we had, near our house, about three or four blocks from our house, a great scrapyard. And, scrap was accumulated there; it was needed, actually, in the war effort. We boys used to play in the scrapyard, and one of the things that always amazed me was a giant magnet that would pick up huge pieces of metal. Sometimes the whole chassis of an automobile would be picked up by this magnet, and it had great force to pick up metal. I want you to imagine one of those great electromagnets, and here, on the ground, are all bits of metal: there's some zinc; there's some aluminum; there's some silver; there's some lead and other pieces of metal; but then, there's some steel and some iron. Some of that metal may be beneath the surface of the ground, and

some of it lying on top of the ground. When that great magnet passes over there, there are certain pieces of metal that are going to rise, and certain pieces of metal are going to stay on the ground. Even gold and silver, as precious as they are, would stay on the ground. What part will rise? That part that has in it iron—the same nature as the magnet. And, what part is going to rise again, of all the world's population? You see, in this congregation, there are some who have an affinity for Jesus Christ, and there are some who don't. And, *if you are Heaven-born, you'll be Heaven-bound*. That which has the nature of the magnet is that which is going to be raised when Jesus comes again.

II. Who?

So, first of all, we've asked the question, "What?" Now, let's ask the second question that we want to answer, and that is, "Who?"—"Who?" And, there is not only a sacred mystery, but there is a select multitude of the Savior and His saints. Again, look, if you will, in verses 16 and 17: *"For the Lord himself"—that's the Savior—"shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ"—that's the who—"shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). He's talking now about the people that are going to be raised. Put it down in your notes: this is not a general resurrection. Some people teach a general resurrection, but there is not a general resurrection. There's a first and second resurrection. This is the first resurrection, and it is for the saved.

And, an ancillary note or scripture would be Revelation 20—put it down—verses 5 and 6: the Apostle John said, *"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished"*—that is, "until after the millennium"—*"This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years"* (Revelation 20:5–6). We're going up in the first resurrection, and we're going to enter into the millennium and reign with Jesus 1,000 years.

The rest of the dead won't be raised until the millennium is over, 1,000 years from the time Jesus comes at the Rapture. *"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection"* (Revelation 20:6). If you're in the first resurrection, you'll not face the second death—*"the second death hath no power [over you]"* (Revelation 20:6). Your body may die, but your spirit cannot die. But, the second death is for those who've never been saved. The second death is the lake of fire. So, blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:6). Those who have part in the first resurrection are those who know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord; therefore, they're blessed, and they're holy. And friend, you'll not be in this resurrection when Jesus comes if you're not blessed and holy, if you haven't been saved. The

second death will have power over you. And, *if you are not born twice, you will die twice*. And, if you die twice, the time will come when you wish you'd never been born at all. So, *"blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection"* (Revelation 20:6).

So, we're talking about the *who*. These are the saved dead: *"the dead in Christ shall rise first"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Are you in Christ? There are only two ways to die: in Christ and out of Christ. And, if you die in Christ, the second death cannot harm you. If you die out of Christ, the second death will keep you forever.

"Now, question, Pastor Rogers: How do we know all of this is going to happen anyway?" Well, Paul gives us an assurance. Look, if you will, in verse 14: *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"* (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Now, I know what some of you are thinking if you are a professor here, today, or a physicist, or a medical doctor, or a person—a scientist. And, you say, "Now Pastor, all this talk about being caught up in the air, all this talk about the dead being raised, all of this—it sounds so sophomoric. It sounds so superstitious." Paul knew that people would believe that; and so, he wants to give some assurance that this would happen.

A. The Incomparable Work of Our Lord

And, first of all, I want you to notice what he says here in verse 14: *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again"* (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Now, do you believe that? Now, if you can believe that miracle, you don't have to have—you won't have—any difficulty with our being raised. If Jesus ascended to Heaven, then why can't we? You see, that's what it's all about. *"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"* (1 Thessalonians 4:14). So, he's saying that the proof of our resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And, if you can't believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you can't believe in biblical Christianity at all. And, if you don't believe in biblical Christianity at all, then you may not believe in those of us who are sleeping in Christ to be raised from the dead. But frankly, folks, I believe Jesus Christ walked out of that grave. And, I believe, one day, if I die, I'm coming out of that grave—I believe that with all of my heart.

B. The Infallible Word of Our Lord

And so, there is the incomparable work of our Lord; and then, there's the infallible Word of our Lord that proves this. Look in verse 15: *"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not [precede] them which are asleep"* (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Now, there are two things: the incomparable work of our Lord—He died and rose again—and then, the infallible Word of our Lord. There are so many soothsayers, astrologers, prognosticators, guessers, people practicing séances and all of these things, and futurists are trying to

tell us what the future is all about. Nobody knows the future but God Almighty and those to whom He has revealed it—nobody. You say, “Doesn’t the devil know the future?” Of course not. The devil’s a knucklehead. Really—really—he’s a knucklehead. To think that he thought, or ever has thought, or ever will think, that he can survive or thrive against the Almighty God. He can’t do that. He doesn’t know the future. I love the song that we sang:

*His doom is sure.
It is settled; it is sealed.
Satan sails a sinking ship,
And he rules a doomed domain.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

How does Paul say these things are going to happen? Well, Jesus died and rose again; then, I can believe in the Rapture and the Resurrection. Friend, the Word of God has been given to us. And, God’s Word, that has been fulfilled in so many ways, will be fulfilled literally. These people who are these prognosticators and other people—they call themselves “prophetic”; I think they’re pathetic. Now, one-third of the Bible is about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The first and last promise in both of the Testaments, Old Testament and New Testament, deals with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

III. When?

Here’s the third thing. We have talked about the *what*. We have talked, secondly, about the *who*. Now, let’s talk, thirdly, about the *when*—the *when* (W-H-E-N). It is a sudden moment—a sudden moment—that is both close and certain.

A. The Signs of the Times

Now, you say, “Pastor, you say it is close. How do you know it is close? How do you know it’s close?” It may be 100 years from now; it doesn’t make any difference—it’s still close. We are living on the edge of eternity. When I say it is close, I’m saying what the Bible is saying: the time is near. Even the Apostle John said before he left this earth—said, “*Little children, it is the last time*” (1 John 2:18). Christians are always living on the edge of eternity. The time is always near. The Apostle Paul, in this passage of Scripture, said, “*Then we which are alive and remain*” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Paul was expecting Christ in his lifetime. Was he wrong? No, he was absolutely right. Nobody can set the date, but we know the date is coming in the twinkling of an eye.

Put these scriptures down. Matthew 24, verse 36: “*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only*” (Matthew 24:36). Now, if any Bible teacher comes along and sets a date, you have a right to say he’s a heretic. If one

of them guesses the right date, if I were God, I'd change it. Nobody knows that day and that hour.

Matthew 24, verse 38: *"For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark"*—and then, Jesus says, "And likewise it'll be in the day of the coming of the Son of man" (Matthew 24:38–39). Now, in the days of Noah: eating, drinking, marrying. They didn't know until it started to rain. The regular round of life. Some teachers erroneously teach that the Church is gonna go through the Great Tribulation. If that were true, then we would have some ideas as to when Jesus Christ is coming. We wouldn't be eating, and drinking, and giving in marriage. No, this is speaking of the normal round of life, a day like today, that Jesus may come.

And so, Jesus said in Matthew chapter 24, verse 42: *"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come"* (Matthew 24:42). And, Jesus said in Matthew 24, verse 44: *"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"* (Matthew 24:44). Question: Are you ready now? Jesus said you're to be ready (Matthew 24:44).

Now, He's coming, as we said in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 52: *"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"* (1 Corinthians 15:52). I heard the other day, on the radio—I thought, "How apropos, because I'm preparing this message"—somebody said that the average person blinks his eyes 20,000 times a day. Now, who counts those kinds of things? How do you figure that out? But, it's so interesting. That's how quickly you blink your eyes. That's how quickly the Lord Jesus Christ is coming—*"in a moment"* (1 Corinthians 15:52), he says there in verse 52. The word *moment* is the word we get our word *atom* from, which means—not Adam (the man Adam), but A-T-O-M—it means "an indivisible unit." That's what men first thought the atom was before the day of nuclear physics. Now, the Bible writer had no idea; he just simply used the word to mean "that which is indivisible." In a split second, in an indivisible time, Jesus Christ is coming.

People say, "Well, Pastor, you're talking about the *when*, but don't you think that the signs of the times mean that Jesus is getting closer?" Yes, I do, but that's not proof. Jesus could've come at any time. We're not waiting on any sign to be fulfilled.

You know, pretty soon, you're going to the malls, and there'll be Christmas decorations all out around. And, what does that mean when they start putting out the Christmas decorations? You say, "Well, that means Christmas is coming." No, it doesn't. It means Thanksgiving is coming, and it may mean Halloween is coming!

You see, these signs of the times are really, primarily, for things that will take place after the Rapture. And, the Second Coming of Jesus is yet to come, after the Rapture. At the Rapture, Jesus only comes to meet the saints in the air. We'll say more about that later on. And, in His Second Coming, in power and glory, His feet are coming back

to touch upon the Mount of Olives. And so, *when?* At any moment. *“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”* (1 Corinthians 15:52). We don’t know when He’s coming, but we know that He’s coming.

B. The Sounds of the Times

There are going to be some sudden sounds. Verse 16 says He’s coming *“with a shout”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Remember when He stood before the grave of Lazarus and said, *“Lazarus, come forth”* (John 11:43), and Lazarus came forth? When Jesus comes from His throne in Glory, He’s going to come with a shout that will echo through and reverberate through the tombs of this world. And, He’ll say, “Come forth,” and the whole Church will come forth.

And, He’s going to come with the voice of the archangel, because the archangel, who is the commander in chief of Heaven’s armies, is going to assemble the angels to get ready to work out the Great Tribulation upon here upon this Earth.

And then, He’s coming also with the trump of God. The trumpet was used to assemble Israel, and God is going to begin to work again with His Israel, as a nation. I wish I had more time to talk about that, but that sound is gonna come at any moment.

I was preaching on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ at a revival meeting at Stuart, Florida, many, many years ago, as a young preacher. And, they gave me a hotel—second floor, right near the railroad track. I didn’t know I was near the railroad track. In the middle of the night, a diesel locomotive stopped right there by my bedroom window, and that engineer, whether he did it on purpose or unwittingly or whatever—he certainly shouldn’t have done it, I don’t think—but he revved that engine and blew that whistle at the same time. It was the most unearthly sound I’ve ever heard—especially in the middle of the night. I mean, right outside the window—can you imagine what the sound of a diesel locomotive and the train whistle would be? Folks, I was certain that it was the Rapture. “Lord, it is here.” And, you know what? Honest confession: It scared me to death, I think—just the noise. I wasn’t afraid I would be left behind. I just said, “O dear God, this is it! What I have preached has happened—it has happened! This is it!” I was getting ready to go right on up through the ceiling. “Jesus has come.” Well, it’s gonna be like that—it’s gonna be like that—at any moment, maybe before we say, “Amen” today.

IV. Why?

Now, number four: Why? That’s the next question. It is a strategic motive—not only a sudden moment, but a strategic motive of rescue, reunion, and reception.

A. A Time of Rescue

First of all, it’s a time of rescue. There are some terrible things that are gonna take place

on this earth. The Great Tribulation will follow the Rapture, but Jesus is going to take the Church out first. He's going to remove the Church

Let me give you some scriptures. You're in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4; go back to chapter 1, and look, if you will, in verses 9 and 10: *"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God"*—now, watch this (verse 10)—*"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come"* (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10). Jesus has delivered His Church from the wrath to come. Revelation 6 calls the Tribulation *"the great day of [God's] wrath"* (Revelation 6:17), but Jesus has delivered us from the wrath to come. And again, the Church, 2,000 years ago, was waiting for Jesus. We're always living on the edge of eternity.

And then, look in chapter 5. You're in chapter 4; go back over to chapter 5, and look in verses 9 through 11: Paul says, *"For God hath not appointed to us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9–11). You see, if I thought the Church was gonna go through the Great Tribulation, then how could I comfort myself, waiting for Jesus to come? Rather than looking up, I'd be looking around. Rather than expecting Christ, I'd be expecting the antichrist. This is no comfort. But, he says, *"God has delivered us from wrath"* (1 Thessalonians 1:10). And, God said to that church there in Revelation 3:10: *"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."* So, as John Phillips says, *"God is getting ready to declare war on this world, and before He does, He's gonna call His nationals home."* We're going to be leaving here, so He's coming—one of the reasons for why is rescue.

B. A Time of Reunion

Another reason for why is reunion. Verse 17 says we're going to *"be caught up together with them...to meet the Lord in the air"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Your brothers, your sisters, your fathers, your mothers, your loved ones in the Church who have died—they're going to be raised; and together, we're going to meet the Lord. We have not said our final goodbyes; there's gonna be a homecoming in the Glory.

*We'll sing and shout and dance about
The Lamb will dry our tears.
We'll have a grand homecoming week
The first ten thousand years.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

C. A Time of Reception

And then, not only is there going to be that rescue and reunion, friend; there is going to be that reception, where we are received to our Lord. Remember John 14? Jesus said, *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go and prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare place for you”*—listen to this—*“I will come again, and receive you unto myself”* (John 14:1–3). I’m looking forward to that—to be received by the Lord Jesus Christ. And, that is the *why* of this Rapture: it is rescue, reunion, and it is reception by the Lord Jesus. Thank you for the song today, “It Will Be Worth It All When We See Jesus.”

V. Where?

Now, here’s the fifth thing: Where? That’s another “W.” Where? Well, it’s gonna be a secluded meeting with the Bridegroom and the bride—a secluded meeting, because verse 17 says we’re going to meet the Lord in the clouds in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). He’s not going to come down here to this earth at the Rapture; He’s going to come and snatch His bride away.

Now, how did a wedding take place in Bible times? Well, in Bible times, the groom, if he were from a wealthy family and was courting a young lady, would go to her house, and he would negotiate with her father. And, he would pay a redemption price; he would buy her—literally buy her—and pay a price for her. And, after he’s paid a price for her, and she’s pledged to him, then they would drink over a cup of wine, a betrothal, over which a betrothal blessing would have been said. They would pledge themselves one to another in solemn covenant. And then, he would go away; he would go back to his father’s house. Now, when it says, “his father’s house,” it’s not talking about a building; it’s just talking about the whole household, the whole thing. He would go back to where his father was; and then, he would begin to build a special dwelling place for himself and for his bride and get everything just ready.

Now, she is there, waiting on him to come back again, and she is preparing her trousseau; she’s preparing her hope chest, and she’s preparing, getting her jewels ready, getting her wedding dress ready. And then, at the precise time—not set by the bride, ladies, but set by the groom and his father—the groom returns back, many times with a torchlight procession. And, maybe at midnight he comes, and there comes somebody to her bedroom window and gives a shout. And, he says, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet him.” She gathers her things—no beauty shop—she just gathers her things and goes to meet him. He picks her up in his arms, and receives her unto himself, and carries her away to a secluded place there, where they consummate the marriage. Now, that’s what Paul is talking about here.

We're going to meet the Lord in the air. What a time that will be when we meet Him in the air! He is coming again, back to this earth, in power and great glory, but not at the Rapture. The Rapture is secret and secluded. It is for the saints; it is for those who are part of His family. Later on, He'll come back with His bride and display His bride in all of His glory.

VI. Wherefore?

Now, here is the last and the final thing, and that is the point that I really want to come to—and it is the *wherefore*. Look, if you will now, in verse 18 of this same chapter: “*Wherefore*”—“*wherefore*”—“*comfort one another with these words*” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). It is a sweet message of comfort and consolation. This is the *wherefore*: it is a sweet message of comfort and consolation. Now, if you want something that—in this day of headline hysteria, in this day of jitters—do you want something that will give you comfort and consolation? Get a bulldog grip on these words, because here's what you need to do:

A. Learn of His Coming

Look, you need to learn of His coming. Paul says in verse 13: “*I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren*” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). The world is saturated with ignorance on these things. Ignorance leads to hopelessness, and hopelessness leads to sorrow. And, you can't afford to be ignorant. Learn of His coming.

B. Live for His Coming

Number two: Live for His coming. Verse 17 says we're going to “*meet the Lord*” (1 Thessalonians 4:17), and the word *meet* is the word here that is used for an official meeting, like an ambassador who's coming back and goes to meet his king. One day, we'll meet Him. I don't want to be ashamed when He comes.

C. Look for His Coming

Not only should we learn of His coming and live for His coming; we need to look for His coming. In verse 17, Paul says, “*We which are alive and remain*” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). You should be expecting Jesus today. People ask me, “Pastor, do you think Jesus is coming in your lifetime?” Yes, I do—I really do. He may not, but I expect Him to come in my lifetime. He may come at any moment.

D. Long for His Coming

And then, we should long for His coming. “*Wherefore comfort one another with these words*” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Oh, what a day that's going to be! In the Song of Solomon, the Song of Songs, in the Bible, there's a verse, I think, that depicts this time—chapter 2, verse 10: “*My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my*

fair one, and come away” (Song of Solomon 2:10). Won’t that be something when Jesus says to me, when He says to you, when He says to His Church, “Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away”?

Conclusion

There’s a man named Steven Covey. He’s written some best-selling books; many of you’ve read them. I certainly don’t agree with all of his theology, but, in those writings, he has an incredible story, and I want you to listen to it; listen very carefully.

He said that a professor came into his classroom, and the professor had a big wide-mouth jar. And, in that jar, he put some big rocks, and those rocks filled the jar up to the top. And then, he asked his students, “Now, is the jar full?” Some of the students said, “Yes, the jar is full.” Well, he said, “No, the jar is not full.” And, he took some gravel and poured gravel in, and it began to fill the crevices around those rocks. And, he shook it down and smoothed it off on the top, and he said to the students, “Now, is the jar full?” They said, “Oh, yes. Now, the jar is full.” “No,” he said, “The jar is not full.” And, he took some fine sand, and he put the sand in on top of the gravel and shook it. And, the sand began to fill those little places, those little crevices, and smooth the sand off the top. He said, “Now, is the jar full?” By now, they were afraid to answer. Someone said, “Well, maybe the jar is full; we think so.” He said, “No, it is not full.” And then, he took some water and poured the water on top of the sand until the water then was absorbed by the sand and filled even the remaining minuscule places. The water came up to the top. And then, he said, “Now, is the jar full?” They said, “Professor, you tell us.” He said, “Yes—yes. The jar is full.”

He said, “Now, what is the lesson?” And so, some of the students said, “Well, your life can get so full that you can’t put anything else in.” He said, “No, that is not the lesson. Here is the lesson: if I had not put the big rocks in first, I could never had put them in last.” Question: Is your life so full that you’ve left out the Rock of Ages? I mean, are you so busy with things—I’m talking about things that seem good, maybe gravel, maybe sand, maybe water—but have you left out those things that really, really, really matter? Precious friend, if you have, I’m going to tell you: it’ll be a sad day for you when the trumpet sounds and Jesus Christ is coming, if I know anything about this Bible, *“in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye”* (1 Corinthians 15:52).

I want you to bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. We’re going to pray, and I’m going to lead you in a prayer. And, in this prayer, you can pray and invite Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages, to come into your life. But, do you know what you’ve got to do? You’ve got to turn that jar upside down right now and just empty it out—turn it upside down, and empty it out. And then, I want you to pray this prayer: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died

to save me, and You promised to save me if I would only trust You. Dear Jesus, I do trust You. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for dying for me on that cross. Thank You for paying my sin debt with Your precious blood. I believe that You're the Son of God. I believe that You paid for my sin with Your blood. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now, like a child, with all of my heart, in childlike faith, I trust You—You only and You always—to save me. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me, and save me, Lord Jesus. Thank You for doing it. Thank You, Lord. Thank You. I don't deserve it. I don't ask for a sign. I don't look for a feeling. I stand upon Your Word. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God. Thank You, Jesus. Begin, now, to make me the person You want me to be, and Lord, give me the courage to make it public, this morning. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Ready for the Rapture

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 25, 1985

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:17

Outline

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Introduction

The title of the message is, “Ready for the Rapture. Ready for the Rapture.” And I want you to take God’s Word please and turn with me to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. This is the second in our message on the Second Coming of Jesus from the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians. And we’re in a series now, and I trust that you’ll be here for each of these messages on this very vital subject. First Thessalonians chapter 4 and we’re going to begin reading in verse 13. And if you don’t have a Bible with you, look there in the pew rack in front of you and most likely there will be one there. And pick it up and, ah, study along with us. Now in this passage of Scripture the apostle Paul says in verse 13, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” Now if you have your own Bible with you, I would like for you to take your pen and underscore the word *ignorant*. And then after that, ah, underscore the word *sorrow*. And then after that underscore *no hope*. And there you will find the problem in Thessalonica. There was ignorance. That ignorance brought sorrow. And that sorrow brought hopelessness. There was a compounded problem. Ignorance plus sorrow equal hopelessness. There was in the hearts and minds of these people a sort of a hopeless ache and a void in their lives. Now what had happened was this: The apostle Paul had come to

Thessalonica. He'd stayed there less than a month. He had a, a marvelous ministry. And he taught them many things. And he taught them, among other things, that Jesus Christ is surely, suddenly, certainly, visibly, actually, bodily coming back to this earth to rule and to reign, and that He might come at any moment. Well, they were excited about that. As well they ought to be, because it is the most glorious fact of the future. The most glorious fact of the past is that He died for our sins and was raised from the dead. The most glorious fact of the future is that He is coming again, literally, physically, bodily, actually, vitally to rule and to reign here on this earth. And so they were excited about that. They were expecting Jesus Christ to come at any moment. But then, in the interval, something happened. Some of their loved ones had died. And they said, "Well, what about this? They've missed it all. Jesus is coming again, but some of them have died. Will they miss the kingdom of God here? Will they miss the glory of the reign of the Lord Jesus? Will they just simply be forgotten when all of these marvelous things have transpired?" And the apostle Paul is writing to answer that problem; ah, the problem of ignorance and the problem of sorrow and the problem of hopelessness. Years ago, off the coast of England a submarine sank. And it was before they had the modern retrieval methods of, of bringing up those people from the ocean floor and the modern methods of communication and radio contact was broken and oxygen was limited. They sent a diver down. He located the, the hull of that sunken, immobilized submarine, and he tapped a message on the side to let them know that they were working and that someone was trying to rescue them. On the inside, someone took a wrench or a piece of metal and began to tap on the hull of that sunken submarine in Morse Code a question. And the question was this: Is there any hope? Is there any hope? That's what the people in Thessalonica wanted to know. That's what this world needs to know. Is there any hope? And I want to tell you, friend, there is. The Bible calls it the blessed hope; the glorious appearing of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. And we are not to sorrow even as others that have no hope. Now the Bible here tells us that Jesus is coming again. And as Tammy sang, we shall see Him as He is. Three things I want you to notice with me this morning.

I. The Confirmation of His Coming

First of all, I want you to notice the confirmation of His coming, the confirmation of His coming. How did Paul prove to these people that Jesus Christ was coming again? Well, read in verses 14-15: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." And then verse 15: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede (the old English) prevent them which are asleep." Literally means precede them which are asleep. And in these two verses Paul

gives us two great confirmations of the coming of the Lord. Here they are. First of all, there is the incomparable work of our Lord. “If we believe died and rose again, even so them which sleep in Christ will God bring with him. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again...” Now the word if there is not used as though there is some doubt about it. It may be translated and is translated in some, ah, Scripture, “Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so...” You see, dear friend, the fact of the Lord Jesus Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection was already established. It was an historical, but supernatural event. Now don’t miss that. It was historical, but it was also supernatural. That is, Jesus Christ literally, actually came out of that grave, and those Christians believed that. Now it was supernatural, inexplicable. It was the work of God. Now the second coming of Jesus Christ and our resurrection is going to be just as factual, just as historical, but just as supernatural. Don’t try to explain this Scripture away, ladies and gentlemen. Don’t try to give some “hocus-pocus, flim-flam, now-you-see-it; now-you-don’t, where was it; there it went” type of interpretation. This is dealing with fact when the Bible says, “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” Because as we sang in that hymn, dear friend, we died with Him, we rose with Him, we will ascend with our Lord. In the Old Testament, they had the Old Testament feasts. And those Old Testament feasts were highly instructive and highly prophetic. One of the Old Testament feasts was what is called the Feast of the First Fruits. And when the grain began to ripen in the field, be it barley, wheat, oats, or something else, they would go out into the field. And the farmer would take a handful of that first ripening wheat and bring it to the priest. He would give it to the priest for a wave offering. Now the wave offering was this: The priest would take that stalk of wheat, that ripen, first ripening grain, and he would take it into the temple and he would just simply wave it before the Lord. Called a wave offering. And, ah, that, that was their way of saying, “

We have faith in the coming harvest. Lord, You are the Lord of the harvest. You are the one that causes our grain to ripen. The harvest is from You. It belongs to You. We give You thanks. We give You praise, Lord, for the harvest that is coming.” This is the Feast of the First Fruits. Later on, when all of the harvest was in, they would meet back at Jerusalem for the Feast of the Harvest and just to rejoice that the whole harvest had come in. Now the Bible in 1 Corinthians 15 calls Jesus “the first fruits of those who sleep.” You see, His resurrection is the pledge of our resurrection. His coming out of the grave typifies the fact that we are all coming out of the grave. That first handful of wheat represents that entire field of wheat. Dear friend, when Jesus rose from the dead, that’s the Feast of the First Fruits. But when we rise from the dead, that’s the celebration of the harvest. And, friend, I am telling you that to have His incarnation without having His Second Coming; to have His first coming without His Second Coming leaves something

lacking. You see, dear friend, it's like have east without west to have our Lord come the first time without coming again. To have the incarnation without the coronation is like having depth without height. Something is missing. To have the Feast of the First Fruits without having the harvest means that something is wrong. You've all hold, heard the story perhaps of the man who was in a hotel room. He was very tired and wanting to go to sleep. The man above him in the next room, ah, had little thought for the man beneath him. And so he, ah, he took off his shoes and just dropped it on the floor before he got in bed. And then he thought to himself, *Oh, I shouldn't have done that. My big old shoe made such a noise on that floor. The man beneath me, I was thoughtless of him.* So he took the other shoe off and gently set it on the floor. After about an hour he heard a knock on the door. It was the man from the room underneath. His eyes were red, dark circles beneath them. He said, "Mister, I've got to go to sleep. Would you please drop the other shoe?" Now the world is waiting for the dropping of the other shoe. His, His incarnation without His coronation is but half a story. The Feast of the First Fruits without the Feast of the Harvest is but half a story. I want to tell you, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Now the first confirmation is what I call, therefore, the incorporable work of our Lord. *The second confirmation is the infallible word of our Lord*, for look in verse 15: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord..." Well, which word of the Lord is he talking about? He's talking about it all, I believe, folks. I don't believe he's just talking about a specific verse or even a particular promise, like the Lord Jesus said, "If I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself...." Yes, that's the word of the Lord, but, dear friend, did you know that the Bible is replete with the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? One Bible scholar said that rightly interpreted, one third of the Bible deals with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Properly interpreted, one third of the Bible deals with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The first promise in the Old Testament deals with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The last promise in the Old Testament deals with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The first promise in the New Testament deals with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The last promise in the New Testament deals with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. One preacher was preaching on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and a critic came up to him afterward and said, "You can't get that out of the Bible." He said, "You sure can. It's in there and you can't get it out." Dear friend, it is there that our Lord is coming again. The incomparable work of our Lord. The infallible word of our Lord.

II. Our Participation in His Coming

That's our confirmation of His coming. That's the first answer to the question, is there any hope? Now the second thing I want you to notice – not only our confirmation of His

coming, but **our participation in His coming**. Now beyond the shadow of any doubt, Jesus is the central figure. One day, He's going to, ah, stand from His throne where He's now seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, and He's going to descend from His lofty heights, and He Himself is going to come into this world. What a day that will be because verse 15 says, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord..." Just underscore that. And then, verse 16: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven..." Don't rationalize that. Don't explain that away. By all means, don't miss that. We shall see our Lord, as Tammy sang. We shall see Him as He is. And the songwriter said, *"Lord, haste the day when our faith shall be sight; the skies be rolled back as a scroll. The trump shall sound, the Lord shall descend. Even so, it is well with my soul."* We're going to see the Lord, and we're going to participate in it. And how are we going to participate? Three ways.

A. **The Miracle of Our Resurrection**

First of all, **there's going to be the miracle of our resurrection**. Now, ah, we're going to be raised from the dead if we have already died. Look, if you will, here, ah, in verse, ah, 16, verse 15-16: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (the word prevent literally means go before, precede, get a head start on them) which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Now this is a shout that our Lord Jesus will give. Ah, He shouted at the grave of Lazarus and said, "Lazarus, come forth," and Lazarus did. This time, when He comes in the sky, He'll give a shout, but He won't say "Lazarus." He'll simply say, "Come forth." And the living saints of all of the ages will come forth. Not all of the people. The Bible says "...and the dead in Christ will rise..." You see, not all of the dead will rise. There are two resurrections, a first and a second resurrection. Revelation 20:6 says, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. On such the second death hath no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." And Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice." And when the voice of the Son of God goes through the tombs of the patriarchs and the saints, and, and death's great kingdom will come crashing down, and the sea will heave her watery bosom and give up her dead. And the winding sheets of sands in the desert will blow and give up their dead. And battlefields will look like a, a plowed farms as the dead come forth and they rise to meet the Lord in the air. You say, "Brother Rogers, do you believe in a actual resurrection?" Yes! Jesus came out of that grave, didn't He? And if God raised Him from the dead, even so in the same way we are coming forth. And so, dear friend, these dead shall live again. And out of the graves they shall come. Their spirits are already with our Lord, for "...to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord..." And so the Bible says that God will bring them

with Him. But then the Bible says, "...the dead in Christ shall rise first..." The body has, the grave has the body; Jesus has the spirit. He brings the spirit. The spirit is reincarnated in that body. So what is our participation? Number one: There is the miracle of our resurrection at His coming. But suppose we've not yet died?

B. The Mystery of the Rapture

Then there will be the mystery of the rapture at His coming. And I use the word mystery because Paul called it a mystery in 1 Corinthians. He said, "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep..." That is, not everyone is going to die. "...we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. And we which remain and are alive shall be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air." Dear friend, what is going to happen is mysterious. Now the word mystery in the Bible, the Greek word *mysterion*, means something that you could not figure out of yourself. It doesn't mean something like a Agatha Christie murder mystery. It just means something unknown until God reveals it. There's going to be the miracle of the resurrection. There's going to be the mystery of the rapture; that there will be a terminal generation that will not die. Millions will be living here on this earth when Jesus Christ comes again. And they are going to be changed. That is the rapture. Verse 17: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air..." Now the voice, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout..." that's when He says, "Come forth." He's speaking to the graves. But what about the voice of the archangel? Well, while our Lord speaks to the dead, the archangel speaks to the living. The archangel deals with the rapture. I believe that the archangel is the counterpart of the friend of the bridegroom. Now remember that all of this is like an oriental wedding. You remember, in an oriental wedding, the groom would leave his father's house. He would go to the house of the bride. He would purchase the bride, pay a price for her, and drink a cup of betrothal wine with her. Then he would go away and he would promise her that he had gone to prepare a place for her, and he would come again and receive her. But in an oriental setting, she never knew when he was coming. Girls, she couldn't get ready. At least, she had to stay ready, really. She just had to get ready and be ready and stay ready. She couldn't set the date for the wedding because that was set for, by the groom's father. And he would prepare a marvelously wonderful banquet. And then this girl, who is betrothed to this m, man, who belongs to him, as though the marriage had already been consummated, she's sewing her trousseau, she's preparing, she's getting ready. And then one night, she doesn't know when it's going to happen, but she's expecting it to happen at any moment. On night, ah, the, the, ah, the entourage begins to come through the meadows and the fields and the woods. And there's one who runs out ahead, and he gives a shout. And

this is the shout that thrills her. “Behold, the bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet him.” And in a moment he comes in, sweeps her up in his arms, and carries her away to his father’s house where there is the marriage supper and feasting and fellowship and the consummation of the marriage. Now that’s what Jesus was talking about in John 14 when He said, “I go and prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that there where I am, there ye may be also.” And so, what is the, “The Lord Him self shall descend from heaven with a shout...” What is the shout? He shouts to the dead, “Come forth!” And then the voice of the archangel, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet him!” And the dead in Christ rise first. And we which are remain and are alive are changed in a moment, transformed, and caught up to meet the Lord Jesus Christ with Him in the air. What a day, folks, that is going to be. And I tell you, folks, it might be soon. Ah, blessed hope. Perhaps today. A moment more and then away! Caught up in the clouds to be with Him. Beyond the reach of conflicts grim, of disappointments, pains and tears. Oh blessed hope, the rapture nears.

C. **The Marvel of Our Reunion**

Now the third thing in our participation. Not only is there going to be, ah, the miracle of our resurrection. Not only is there going to be the mystery of our rapture. **But there’s going to be the marvel of our reunion.** Look, if you will, again in verse 17: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them...” Underscore the phrase *together with them*. You see, this was the problem. What about the dead in Christ? Will they miss it all? Paul says, “No, they’re not going to miss it all. We’re all going together. The dead in Christ rise first. Why? Cause we’ve got a six-foot head start on them. The dead in Christ rise first. And then we which remain and are alive, we’re changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye. And then together we go up to meet the Lord in the air, and we’re going to have a reunion. Your sainted mother, your father, brother, sister, neighbor, friends, the patriarchs of the ages, together we’re going, hand-in-hand, to meet the Savior. Abraham will say to Sarah, “Sarah, wake up. Dust, ah, get that dust off your shroud. We’re going to meet our Lord.” And together, hand-in-hand, we’re going to see our dear Savior.

Someone has put it this way: We’ll sing and shout and, and, and praise the Lamb. The Lord, the Lamb will dry our tears. We’ll have a grand homecoming week the first ten thousands years.

III. **The Anticipation of His Coming**

Now, folks, that’s the participation. Resurrection, rapture, reunion. Resurrection, rapture, reunion. Now think not only of the confirmation. Think not only of the, ah, participation. But think, finally, of **the anticipation of His coming**. Let’s continue to read. Now look, if

you will, here in verse 17: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord...” Underscore the phrase *meet the Lord*. “...to meet the Lord in the air...” Can you imagine that, meeting the Lord? I mean, folks, this is not a fairytale. We’re talking to you about facts. You’re going to meet Jesus. You are going to meet the Lord. I mean, literally meet the Lord. Now, now let that settle in. Now, folks, I want you to understand I’m talking to you about facts, something that is reality and something that could happen in the next fifteen seconds. You’re going to meet the Lord. Now let that settle in. You know what I’ve learned? Let me tell....every now and then I, I say something profound. And so, when I do, I have to tell you ahead of time because you’d miss it.

Conclusion

Now listen. I’m going to tell you something profound. Are you ready? Everything that’s going to happen eventually does. You’re going to meet the Lord. Everything that’s going to happen eventually does. Jim Whitmire, one of these days you’re going to come face to face with Jesus Christ. You’re going to meet the Lord. We are going to meet the Lord. What an anticipation there ought to be in that. This word *meet* is not an ordinary word for meet. It has the idea, it was used of a king when he would go out to greet a returning ambassador. It is an official greeting and welcoming. We’re going to meet the Lord. We are ambassadors for Christ. Do you know what an ambassador is? He is one who represents the person of a king in the court of another. The, the apostle Paul said, “We are ambassadors for Christ.” And we are returning ambassadors. And when our Lord comes, we are going out to meet the Lord, and we are going to give an account of how we represented Him down here. We are going to give an account at that meeting. What a day that will be. What, how we ought to anticipate that. We ought to anticipate it in several ways. We ought to anticipate it with, in joy. But, folks, we ought to anticipate it with all seriousness. If I’m going to have to give an account to my Lord, not for salvation; that’s settled, but, oh, don’t you want to hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many.” A visitor, a tourist was in Northern Italy by Lake Como. I’ve been there, beautiful spot. And he visited an ancient castle, a villa, the Villa Ascanotti. And he asked the old gardener if he just might go in and look around. The gardener said, “Why, sure. Come in. We’re glad to have guests.” It was one of the most beautiful gardens he’d ever seen. He said, “Ah, where is the owner, the, the master of this estate?” “Oh,” he said, “he’s, he’s gone.” He said, “He’s off somewhere. I don’t know where he is.” He said, “Well, how long has it been since he’s been here?” “Oh,” he said, “I haven’t seen him for twelve years.” Well, he said, ah, “Does he ever write you?” “No.” He said, “Well, how do you, where do you get your orders?” He said, “His agent in Milan. He tells me what to

do.” He said, “Well, when is he coming?” “I have no idea.” Well, he said, “You, you keep this garden as though you were expecting him tomorrow.” He said, “Today, sir, today.” At any moment our Lord may come. Dear friend, I don’t know. You don’t know. But I know as surely as my name is Adrian Rogers, as surely as Jesus came out of that grave, as surely as this book is true, Christ is coming again! The question is, are you ready for the rapture? Let’s bow in prayer. Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. No one stirring, looking around. The Jesus who came the first time is the one who makes us ready for His coming the second time. To know Him is to be ready. To serve Him is to be ready. How many today would say, “Pastor, I know I’m not perfect. I know I have failed my Lord. But, Pastor, sincerely in my heart, I love Jesus. I have repented of my sin. I have received Him as my Lord and Savior. I have been born again. God’s Spirit agrees with my spirit that I am a child of God. And I know if I should die right now, I’d go straight to heaven. Or if He should suddenly come, I’d be ready to meet Him. Jesus Christ is real to me. I’m saved and I know it. And as my pastor and friend, I’ll give you that testimony right now by this lifted hand.” Would you just hold your hand up if it’s real to you and you know that you’re saved beyond the shadow of any doubt. Just lift it for a moment and take it down. Now I didn’t ask you to lift it primarily that I might see it. I, I asked you to lift it to cause you to think about it, because everybody at that moment either had to lift his hand or not, right? You had to think about it. I am ready or I’m not ready. Now some of you might have, for appearances, lifted your hand and, but in your heart you still would have some doubt as to whether or not you’re truly ready. Now if you’re not ready, I want to tell you how you can get ready. It is not, you’re not saved by joining a church or getting baptized or giving your money or living a good life, keeping the Ten Commandments, obeying the Golden Rule. All of these things are well and good and they all have their purpose, but none of these things can save you. If they could, Jesus Christ would never have died to save you. He died to do something for you that you cannot do for yourself. With His blood He paid your sin debt. But now, let me tell you His death for you does you absolutely no good. As a matter of fact, it only increases your judgment unless you repent of your sin and receive it on your behalf and unless you trust Him as your Lord and Savior. The Bible says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” To be saved means that every sin is forgiven, that Jesus Christ now comes and lives in your heart to give you a new nature, and that one day, perhaps sooner than you realize, He’ll take you home to heaven to be with Him. Now you, you, you receive that by faith. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is a committal to Christ, His lordship. By faith forever. If you would pray a prayer like this: “Dear God, I know You love me. And I’m a sinner, and I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. Jesus, You promised to save me. You died to save me if I would only trust You. Lord Jesus, I do

trust You right now with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me. Make me the person You want me to be. Give me the strength to live for You, to follow You. And help me never to be ashamed of You.” If you’d pray a prayer like that, you don’t have to use those words. But if you would say that out of your heart, if you’d call upon the name of the Lord, He’ll save you, for the Bible says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Father, I pray that many here today will say yes to Jesus. In His precious name. Oh, Holy Spirit of God, draw people to Jesus Christ. Amen, amen.

The Church's Hope

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 31, 1980

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:17

Outline

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Introduction

Now, I want you to take your Bibles, please, and turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, and, we're going to begin reading in verse 13, as we think, today, about “The Church's Hope: the Second Coming of Christ.”

First Thessalonians chapter 4 and verse 13: *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again...”*—and, by the way, we do, don't we?—*“if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be*

with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

I believe that we’re living in the days of the coming of our Lord. *I believe we ought to be living as though Jesus died yesterday, rose this morning, and was coming back tonight.*

I can’t set a date, but I’m kind of like that old farmer who woke up in the middle of the night and heard the grandfather’s clock sounding the hour: bong—one-o’clock; bong—two; bong—three; bong—four. On it went: ten—bong; eleven—bong; twelve—bong; thirteen—bong; fourteen—bong. That frightened him. He turned over and shook his wife, and he said, “Old woman, wake up.” She said, “Why? What time is it?” He said, “I don’t know, but it’s later than it’s ever been before.” I want to tell you this: I can’t tell you exactly what time it is on God’s clock, but I have a deep, deep feeling that it’s very late in this age.

And, I believe that our Lord is writing in boxcar letters across the horizon that you and I, who live in this generation, need to be prepared for the coming of our dear Lord.

I. Reassurance

I want you to notice several things about this passage of Scripture, as we look at it together. The first word that I want you to notice is the word *reassurance—reassurance*. Notice in verses 13 to 15—Paul says, “*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep*” (1 Thessalonians 4:13–15).

Now, the Christians at Thessalonica were concerned, because the Lord had gone away, and had promised to return; and, they believed that promise literally. But, some in the church fellowship had already died, or *gone to sleep*, as the Scripture uses that term. And, they said, “Well, now, what will happen to them? Will they miss the coming of the Lord? Or, are they gone forever?” Somehow, these Christians did not have a good understanding of what will happen when Jesus Christ comes again. And so, Paul wrote this, first of all, to reassure them—to reassure them that, when the Lord comes, there’s going to be a resurrection, and we’re all going up together to meet the Lord, whether dead or alive.

Now, I know that sounds very supernatural, and, of course, it is. There were many who missed the glory of the first coming of our Lord, because they did not believe in the supernatural, the virgin birth, and other things like that. And, there are many who are going to miss this glory of the second coming of the Lord, because they cannot accept

the supernatural. Friend, it's all supernatural; and, don't ever, ever get your mind against the supernatural.

I remember hearing about Dr. Scarborough, who, one time, preached on Jonah and the great fish, or Jonah and the whale. And, when he got home, his little boy asked him, "Daddy, do you really believe that story—I mean, about Jonah and that fish—do you honestly believe it?" Dr. Lee Scarborough said, "Well, son, if God is great enough to make a fish in the first place, and God is great enough to make a man in the first place, don't you believe that that same God could make a fish that could swallow a man and keep him alive in his belly for three days?" And, the little fellow said, "Well, if you're going to bring God into it, that's different." Well, friend, I want to tell you: I'm bringing God into this whole thing.

Now, if you think that the second coming of our Lord smacks of supernaturalism, well, let's just remember we're talking about God. We're talking about the God who made it all, and He can do anything He wishes to do; and, I believe He's going to do just what He says He's going to do.

And so, the apostle is writing, first of all, to give some word of reassurance; and, he is saying that the second coming of the Lord is just as real, just as vital, just as believable, as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so. And so, the first word I want you to notice is the word *reassurance*. And, what a reassurance it is to me, this very moment!

II. Return

Now, the second word is the word *return*, for I want you to notice, also, in verse 16, where the apostle says, "*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven*" (1 Thessalonians 4:16)—the Lord Himself. And, he's speaking, here, of the Lord Jesus. There are some who've tried to spiritualize, and say that the coming of our Lord is when the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. There's a very real sense in which He is the other Jesus, but that's not what Paul is talking about here; and, he makes that very clear.

Others say that the coming of our Lord is when a Christian dies, and he's taken by the angels to be with his Lord; and, in that sense, the Lord comes and receives him unto Himself. And, that's true; but, that's not what Paul is speaking about here. He wants to make it very clear that it is this same Jesus "*which is taken up from you...[that] shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go*" (Acts 1:11). The Lord Himself, just as real as His first coming, the same Jesus that came into this world through the portal of a virgin's womb, the same Jesus who spoke to the raging storm until it became as calm as a millpond, like a little baby sleeping on its mother's bosom, this same Jesus who arched the rainbow of hope over human sorrow, the same Jesus that opened blinded

eyes and straightened crippled limbs; this same Jesus who opens the door of the morning and floods the world with light, this same Jesus who pulls down the shade of the night and pins it with a star; this same Jesus. *“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). The word *reassurance* blesses my heart. The word *return* blesses my heart.

III. Resurrection

The next word I want you to notice is in verse 16. It’s the word *resurrection*—the word resurrection: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). There’s going to be a resurrection of those saints who know the Lord, those who are born again—not a general resurrection, but a resurrection *ek nekron*—from the dead, out of the dead—a resurrection out of the dead, of the dead in Christ. *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection”* (Revelation 20:6). Those who are blessed, those who are holy, those who have been saved, are going to come forth out of their graves.

Now, when a Christian dies, you know very well that the body returns to the earth, but the spirit returns to God. *“To be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 5:8). And, it is the body that dies—not the soul, not the spirit.

I heard about a man whose name was Mr. Peas—P-e-a-s—just like we eat. And, he died, and someone put on his grave marker: *“This ain’t Peas, it’s just the pod; Peas shelled out, and went to God.”* And, that’s what happens when a Christian dies: He just simply leaves this old pod that we live in; he ascends up to glory.

As Jesus Christ told a dying thief, so long ago, *“This day shalt thou be with me in paradise”* (Luke 23:43). But, what happens to the body? There is going to come a resurrection of that body, for the Bible says, *“The dead in Christ...”*—he’s speaking, now, of the earthly body, this spacesuit that we live in while we’re on Planet Earth—*“The dead in Christ shall rise first”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Now, let’s leave our passage in 1 Thessalonians, and just mark it, because we’ll come right back in a moment; but let’s think, for a moment, about this resurrection body, and turn to 1 Corinthians 15 with me. And, let’s look, as we discuss the resurrection body for a little while, because, to me, it’s so extremely interesting. What are we going to be like? Notice in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 35: *“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up?”* (1 Corinthians 15:35). Now, that’s a good question. That’s a very good question. *“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”* (1 Corinthians 15:35). Now, Paul asks the question rhetorically; and then, he answers the question. And, I want us to see the grand answer

that the apostle gave here, in this fifteenth chapter, which is, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, one of the grandest, greatest, most glorious chapters in all of the Bible—the grandest, one of the grandest.

A. Illustration

First of all, I want you to notice the word *illustration*. Paul gives us an illustration. He says it's going to be like a seed that falls into the ground and dies. Notice verse 36: *"Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not [made alive], except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body"* (1 Corinthians 15:36–38). He says, "Well, I've given you a wonderful illustration in nature. Every time you plant a seed in the ground, and that seed rots, it dies, it decays. And yet, somehow, there is a sense of continuity. There is a germ of life. Even though that seed goes into the ground, it dies, it decays, and it rots—there's a principle there that causes it to spring forth into something even more glorious."

You know, people have tried to think about the resurrection, and they say, "Well, it's so impossible, because you take a body that goes into the earth, and it absolutely decays. It just becomes, after a while, if it stays there long enough, a black streak in the earth. Or, the roots of a tree go down and absorb that body, and that body becomes the bark, and the leaves, and the fruit on that tree. Or, a carnivorous animal comes along and devours that corpse; and then, that body is taken into the body of this animal, and it becomes a part of his body. Or, here's a man who loses a finger in a sawmill, loses an arm in Korea, and then he is drowned in the Amazon, and devoured by the piranhas. How is the Lord going to bring all this back together?" Well, the truth of the matter is, dear friends, that we all receive a new body every seven years. We're sloughing off the old cells and building new cells, and there's not a particle of you that was here seven years ago; and yet, you're still you. You're still you. There is a continuing principle.

I used to wonder about this, until, one day, I was reading through the Psalms, and the Lord just blessed my heart, as I was reading how God describes the creation of a newborn child. And, He says, in Psalm 139, verse 16, something very wonderful to me. The psalmist is reflecting upon how God brought him into this world, and he says this, in Psalm 139, verse 16: *"In thy book all my members were written...when as yet there were none of them"* (Psalm 139:16).

Now, do you know what that means? It means, when God got ready to make Adrian Rogers, God had a little book, and God had a little plan. He had a schematic. He had all my genes, and chromosomes, and all of that, in His plan. He said, "This is Adrian Rogers." I was on His drawing board. "And in thy book all my members were written, before there were any of them" (Psalm 139:16). God said, "I'm going to make a guy called Adrian Rogers." And so, He made me. Just exactly like He made me, He made

you. Just exactly like He made you, He had a plan. He had you written in His book. And so, that's the reason that you are what you are: because God designed you. You came off His drawing board.

Now, what's going to happen, when God gets ready to resurrect you? God will just go through the files: "Ah, it's time to resurrect Adrian. There's his card." Put it in, and up will pop Adrian—that's all there is. It's so simple. You see, the thing that makes me *me* is not this particular flesh and bone that I have, right now. That will be gone in about another seven years. But, there is a continuing principle; there is a design; there is a schematic that God has on me. And, when God gets ready for me, up I'll come. It's just that simple: that the God that designed me is the God that's going to resurrect me. And so, God gives us an illustration. It's like a seed that goes into the ground. It's planted. It rots. But, out of that death, and out of that decay, comes life that's more glorious.

B. Individuality

Now, I want you to leave the word *illustration* and look at the word *individuality* in verse 38, if you will: "But God gives us a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body" (1 Corinthians 15:38). Somebody says, "Are you going to know one another in Heaven?" Indeed, we will. Somebody asked Mr. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "Will we know one another in Heaven?" Spurgeon said, "We know each other here on Earth. Will we be bigger fools in Heaven than we are here on Earth?" As a matter of fact, we will know, as we're known (1 Corinthians 13:12). We'll know each other like God knows us. Won't that be wonderful? We will know, even as we're known.

Do you know why, so many times, we have misunderstandings? Because, we don't know each other. You know, I'm honestly convinced that most Christians really want to get along with each other. But, "It's so hard to dwell there, above with those that we love—that will be glory; but to live here, below, with those that we know—that's another story." It's just sometimes so hard—so hard. But, won't it be sweet—won't it be glorious—that we will know, even as we are known? And, we'll see not only what people did, but why they did it.

And, we're going to be different. We're not going to be like we were stamped out of a cookie cutter. We're going to be different. God never does anything exactly the same way. God never makes duplicates—only originals: no two snowflakes alike, no two leaves alike, no two stars alike. Isn't our God a great God? What a wonderful God He is! And, we cannot begin to imagine the complexity of this place called Heaven, created from the fingertips of our glorious God. So, He gives every seed a body as it pleased Him—*Individuality*.

C. Improvement

And then, the next word I want you to notice is the word *improvement*; and, I know that

you're glad that that's there. Look in verse 42—verse 42: *“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; 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. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body”* (1 Corinthians 15:42–44). And, all of this tells us, friend, we're going to get better; and, I'm so glad.

You see, when I was saved, I was instantaneously justified in my spirit. I'm being progressively sanctified in my soul. I will ultimately be glorified in my body. God's not finished with me yet. And, I know I don't look too redeemed, but you haven't seen the finished product. You see, it'll be me, but it won't really be me.

An acorn and an oak are really the same—did you know that? I mean, out of a little acorn... Isn't that a wonderful thing that an oak tree can come out of an acorn? Have you ever looked at a mighty oak tree and realized... When you're discouraged and feeling a little blue, take a look at an oak tree, and see what a nut can do. Here's just a little old acorn, and out of that acorn—out of that acorn—comes a mighty, glorious oak tree. What an improvement!

Look at the ugly, repulsive caterpillar. And, from that caterpillar comes—after it spends a while in the grave of a cocoon—after a while comes the glorious Monarch butterfly. What a metamorphosis—the same, and yet, not the same.

Look at a lump of coal; and then, look at the diamond that you gave your wife when you wanted to marry her. They're both the same. Both are carbon, but one is carbon in humiliation; the other is carbon in glory.

Oh, let me tell you, friend, what a change there's going to be. What a change there's going to be! *“It is sown in dishonour; 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”* (1 Corinthians 15:43–44). It is the same, but, my, what a difference! I don't think we can imagine what these resurrection bodies are going to be like.

Could you and I just take an imaginary journey? And, we'd walk through the streets of glory, through the halls of Heaven, and we see a creature coming. I look. I can hardly believe the glory, the majesty, and the effulgence of this creature. And, I say to him, “Oh, oh, we've met the Lord. You're Jesus, aren't you?” “Oh,” He laughs; he says, “Of course not. I'm not Jesus.” I said, “Well, you must be an angel. Are you the archangel Gabriel? Are you Michael?” He says, “No, I'm no angel.” “Well,” I say, “you must be one of the saints. Are you Peter? Paul? Are you Moses? Who are you?” “Oh,” he says, “I'm Gray Allison.” I say, “Gray, I hardly recognized you.” Oh, what a change—what a change there's going to be!

You know, many times, we think we've seen a man. We haven't seen a man. Why, you've never really ever seen a man. Well, in a way, you've seen a man. Suppose you'd

never seen a railroad train, and I take you out here and show you a train that's been wrecked. And, here's the twisted metal lying on the tracks. And, I say, "There's a train." Have you seen a train? Well, yes, you've seen a train—but not really. You've seen a train wreck. That's no man; that's a wreck.

You see, look—everybody talks about being made in the image of God. Friend, we're not in the image of God. We're in the image of Adam. Adam was in the image of God, but that image was wrecked and spoiled. And then, Adam brought forth a son after his likeness, and in his image. Oh, what a change there's going to be! What a change there's going to be when we receive our manhood again, when we receive our womanhood again, when we become what our dear Lord made us to be. Oh, there's going to be improvement!

D. Image

And, that brings us to the next word; it's the word *image*. Notice, in verse 47, as we continue to read—the Bible says, "*The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy...*"—that is, we look like the sons of Adam—"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." Now, here's one of the sweetest verses in the Bible: "*And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*" (1 Corinthians 15:47–49).

We're going to be like Him, friend—the second Adam from above. Oh, the last Adam—we're going to be like Him. No wonder the psalmist said, "*I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness*" (Psalm 17:15). He's going to change our vile body like unto His glorious body.

You say, "Brother Rogers, what are we going to be like?" I don't know, for "*it doth not yet appear what we shall be*" like, but we're going to be like Him (1 John 3:2). And, that's good enough for me. Oh, what an improvement! We've borne the image of the earthly long enough. We're going to bear the image of the heavenly. We're going to be like the Lord Himself. And so, there is the word *image*.

E. Immortality

And then, there's the word *immortality*. Begin in verse 51: "*Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*" (1 Corinthians 15:51–53). We'll never die again. *Friend, if you're born twice, you'll just die once.* "And, there are no graves on the hillsides of glory," someone has well said. And, I thank God for the immortality that He has given me. I will live in this body forever.

F. Inspiration

And then, the word *inspiration*. Notice—in verse 58—notice the *therefore* (1 Corinthians 15:58). *And, friend, when you see a therefore in the Bible, find out what it's there for.* Now, look: “*Therefore*”—what? What’s He talking about? The resurrection. Therefore, death can’t end it all. Therefore, the devil can’t hurt you. Therefore, we’re going to be like Jesus. Therefore, there’s something glorious coming—“*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 15:58). There’s more coming.

*It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day,
It pays every step of the way.*

—FRANK C. HUSTON

“*Therefore, my beloved brethren*”—therefore—“*be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Go back to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, for a moment. We’re talking about resurrection. Our Lord said, first of all, to be reassured. Your dead loved ones are not going to miss it all. There’s going to be a return—a return: “*The Lord himself shall descend from heaven*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). There’s going to be a resurrection. “*The dead in Christ shall be raised*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

IV. Rapture

And then, the next word I want you to notice is the word *rapture*—the word *rapture*. Now, the word *rapture* is not here in the text, but that doesn’t mean there’s not going to be a rapture, because the Bible describes the rapture. The *rapture* is just a word that some theologians use—and, I like it—to describe what’s going to happen to us. Now, I will grant that the word *rapture* is not found in the Bible, but *catching away* is. I’ll grant you that the word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible, but the doctrine is taught. And, I’ll grant you that the word *millennium* is not found in the Bible, but it speaks of a thousand years, which means exactly that. And so, this is just a word, though. The word *rapture* means, “to seize, to snatch away,” and that’s what’s going to happen.

Let me tell you something: The Lord Jesus Christ gathered His disciples, and, in John 14, He said, “*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you...*”—Jesus Christ, who was truth incarnate, would never have left this hope beating within the human bosom, if it were but a fond delusion—“*if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*” (John 14:1–

3).

In order to understand this, you have to understand an Oriental wedding. Here's the way they had weddings in those days: The groom would leave the father's house, and he would journey to the household of his prospective bride. And, there, he would negotiate with the father of the bride for a price that he would pay in order to purchase the bride. And, they would negotiate, and he would purchase; he would pay, to the father of the bride, a purchase price. And, of course, you know, our dear Lord did that. He left His Father's house. He came out of the ivory palaces into this world of woe. And, what a price He paid! You know, He didn't love us because we're valuable; we're valuable because He loves us. You know, God set His affection on us, and "*while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). And, the price He paid is not silver and gold, but the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood, as of a lamb without spot and without blemish.

And, after the price was paid, and after there was an agreement, then, this young lady was betrothed. That is, she was set aside for the bridegroom, and she was his, just as truly as though the marriage had already been consummated. But, the marriage had not yet been consummated. And then, they would fill a beautiful cup with ruby-red wine, and they would drink some together. A blessing would be said over this cup. It was the cup of betrothal, and they would both drink of it. It was a pledge that they belonged one to the other, and it was a pledge that the husband, or the bridegroom, would come back to receive his bride. It was also a recognition that the price had been paid for her. And then, the bridegroom would leave, and go to prepare their place to live. He would go, many times, since it was a patriarchal society, back to his father's house. And, there, in his father's house, he would prepare a place for her. And, he said, "Now, I'm going away, and I'll be back."

And, while he was away preparing a place, she was preparing her trousseau. She would start to sew. She'd start to gather her jewels, and all of the things that would be ready for that time. And, you know, that's what we're doing, right now. We're just preparing the trousseau. You know, the Bible says that the linen gown that we wear to that marriage supper of the Lamb will be the righteous acts of the saints (Revelation 19:8). Now, this doesn't mean that we're saved by works, but it does mean, dear friend, that our wedding gown is going to be determined by the way that we live right now—the righteous acts of the saints, not the imputed righteousness that Jesus gives, but the righteous acts that we do—even good deeds, through the power that He gives us. And so, she was preparing her hope chest, and she was sewing, and gathering things, and getting ready.

But, the amazing thing about an Oriental wedding, the thing that led to the excitement in this day, was that she never knew when he was coming back. You see,

this was a part of the excitement. She had to always be ready. And, she'd keep her bags packed, and she'd sit at home; and, she was wondering, "Is he coming tonight?"

And then, he would come from his father's house with a procession of his friends—called friends of the bridegroom. And, they would come in a torchlight procession—many times, through the woods—and she would not know until... Oh, they did give her just a little chance. A forerunner would go out in front—just a little way in front—and, suddenly, the stillness of that night would be shattered by a cry: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." Oh, her little heart would just go pitty-pat, pitty-pat. "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." This was the time that she'd been waiting for. This was the time he's coming to get her. He's coming to take her away. He's coming to take her to his father's house. And, she'd gather her things, and there he'd be. He'd just burst in the door, pick her up, and away they'd go—off to the father's house. And, there, all the friends would be assembled; and oh, what a party they'd have! Oh, the finest of everything!

You know, when Jesus turned that water into wine, the bridegroom said, "I've never tasted anything like this." Friend, He's fixing a whole meal. I tell you, there's going to be the marriage supper of the Lamb, and all of the friends will be gathered there. And, they would feast and make merry.

But, this bride would have a veil, and all of the friends would not see the bride as she really was. And then, for seven days, the bride and the groom would enter into the bridal chamber; and, that marriage would be consummated. And, oh, in such rich, sweet, full, intimate love, that only God can bestow—the consummation. And then, after the seven days of the supper, the bride would be presented. The veil would be taken off, and the bridegroom would bring her out, again, and say, "I want you to see her beauty. I want you to look at my beloved bride."

Oh, I tell you, dear friend, that's what Jesus meant, when He said, "*I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself*" (John 14:2–3). There's going to be that time, very soon, when we're going to hear that angel say, "*Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him*" (Matthew 25:6). And, we're going to be swept away in the arms of our beloved in a honeymoon in the skies. And, the earth will be here, and seven years of great tribulation, and the bride will be hidden. But, I tell you, then, God's going to remove the veil; and, everybody's going to know who we are. Oh, let me tell you something: Our Lord is going to say, "This is My beloved bride. Here comes the bride! Here comes the bride!"

Oh, I'm so glad that that's going to happen. I'm so glad that I'm a part of it. I don't want to be in Hell when all that's going on, mister. I tell you, it's wonderful to know what God has prepared for those that love Him.

There's the word *rapture*—the word *rapture*. We're going to be raptured. We're going to be caught away for a honeymoon in Heaven. *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up..."*—there it is—*"caught up together with them in the clouds"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

V. Reunion

Now, the next word is the word *reunion*—reunion. Look in verse 17: *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them..."*—underscore that word together—*"shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). And, I'm so glad for that together. Friend, listen—there's coming a homecoming. There's coming a day when all of the saints of all of the ages are going to meet and love one another.

I have a little boy in Heaven. We have five children; one is in Heaven. Our son's name, who is in Heaven, is Philip. We named him Philip, because of that soul-winning deacon, and we just committed him to God to be a soul winner. But, God took Philip, when he was a little baby. I'd never had any real death in our home. My brothers and sisters are living. Joyce's brothers and sisters are living. My mother and daddy are living. Joyce's mother and dad are living. We've never had a death in our immediate family. Phillip was born on my eldest son's birthday, and he died on Mother's Day.

And, I was a very young preacher, just out of seminary, and I didn't understand it all; but I turned to the Word of God for comfort. And, when I turned to the Word of God for comfort, the first verse that I saw—that I'd never seen before—was this: the first chapter of 2 Corinthians: "Blessed be God, the God of all comfort, and the Father of all mercies; who comforted us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

God said, "Adrian, I'm going to give you my comfort, and it's going to be so real that you're going to be able to comfort others all the days of your life." God was so real. Joyce and I drove to West Palm Beach, Florida, from our church about 60 miles away, where our folks lived, to tell them about it. All the way we sang—all the way. We sang a song that we'd almost forgotten, and never really thought about the words—little simple songs like:

*What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,*

*Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!*

—JOSEPH M. SCRIVEN

We wondered what to put on the tombstone—the grave marker of our little boy—and we just put these words—and, if you'd go to West Palm Beach, Florida, you'd see them—just "Philip," and then, the answer—"Yes, Lord." That's all it says: "Philip"—"Yes, Lord." We believe God called him, and he went home, the first time.

But, I tell you, that doesn't mean that to me. That little grave marker speaks of the second coming of Jesus to me. I tell you, I believe with all of my heart that, one day, there's coming a day when our dear Lord shall say, "Philip"; he'll say, "Yes, Lord." "Adrian"—"Yes, Lord." "Joyce"—"Yes, Lord." "Steve"—"Yes, Lord." "Gayle"—"Yes, Lord." "David"—"Yes, Lord." "Gray"—"Yes, Lord." "Roy"—"Yes, Lord." "Philip"—"Yes, Lord." Together—*together*—we're going to glory. Together we're going to Heaven.

*We'll sing, and shout, and dance about,
The Lamb will dry our tears.
We'll have a grand homecoming week
The first ten thousand years.*

—RAYMOND BROWNING

Conclusion

I'm glad that Jesus is coming again.

The Comfort of His Coming

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 21, 1991

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:18

Outline

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Introduction

Well, how marvelous! Thank you so much all who've had a part this morning in helping us to worship. Open God's Word to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, and in a moment we begin reading in verse 13. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, and we're going to begin reading in just a moment in verse 13. May I tell you the background of this passage of Scripture? Paul was writing to the saints at Thessalonica, and they were confused. And the reason that they were confused is found in verse 13. Look at it—he says, *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep...”*—that was Paul's definition of those who had already died who knew the Lord Jesus. He calls death but sleep for them—*“them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope”* (1 Thessalonians 4:13). And in that one verse he mentions three great, great problems: ignorance, sorrow, and hopelessness—ignorance, sorrow, and hopelessness. Now ignorance causes sorrow, and sorrow and ignorance put together cause hopelessness. And that's why we have the passage that has been written for us this morning.

Now if you'll go to the end of this chapter, verse 18, you'll read this: *“Wherefore*

comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” For ignorance, sorrow, and hopelessness, we have a word of comfort. And it all is wrapped up in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. So the title of our message this morning: “The Comfort of His Coming.” “The Comfort of His Coming.” I am so excited about today’s message, not because I am the preacher, but because of the truth that is here.

Now what has happened is this: Paul has told these people at Thessalonica, “Jesus is coming, and we’re going to see Him, and we’re going to reign with Him in His Kingdom.” And they were all expecting the Lord to come at any moment. But in the interval, some of those saints at the church of Thessalonica died. And the loved ones were saying, “Oh, they missed it. They weren’t here. They have missed the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.” And Paul wrote what he wrote to put their hearts at ease, and to tell them that even those who have died have not missed the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And he talks to them about the heavenly homecoming. He talks to them about an event that we’re going to talk about today called the Rapture of the Church, when Jesus will split the skies, and the dead in Christ will rise first. “We who remain and are alive will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52), be given glorified bodies, and then, those who have died, and those who are yet living, will be caught up to meet our Lord in the sky in a heavenly homecoming.

And then, he says, “*Comfort one another with these words*” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). You see, sorrow looks *back*; worry *looks around*; *but*, faith *looks up*. That’s what we’re talking about today—three things I want you to see in this passage. And oh, how my heart beats with hope that you’ll see all three of them, and that you’ll never forget them!

I. We Can Rely on the Certainty of His Coming

The first fact that I want you to learn this morning is that we can rely on the certainty of His coming. Do you have it? We can rely on the certainty of His coming. There are no ifs, ands and buts about it. No “perhaps so.” No “maybe so.” Not maybe, but beyond the shadow of any doubt, we know that we know. And Paul gives us two great proofs, two great assurances that we know that Jesus Christ is coming again.

A. The Saving Work of Our Lord

Now look, if you will, at these wonderful proofs that he gives us. Verse 13: “*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For...*”—now here’s his argument, and here’s the first assurance—“*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*” (1 Thessalonians 4:13–14). So the first assurance is the saving work of our Lord.

What is the saving work of our Lord? Jesus died, and He rose again. My dear friend, that is the gospel, and it is the historical and supernatural proof that Jesus Christ is coming again. Just as He came literally the first time and died literally in fulfillment of prophecy, just as He was buried, just as He rose again, and all of this transpired literally, we can know beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure that He is coming again. You see, his death, burial, and resurrection—that is the gospel. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He was raised again the third day. Paul says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, that is the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1).

*Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
Buried He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever;
One day He's coming—O glorious day!*
—J. WILBUR CHAPMAN

That, my friend, is the gospel. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, He is coming again. Have you understood the gospel that Christ died for your sins? Have you understood that? If not, you're not ready for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

I heard of a little boy who got saved in a particular church, and they had him in the counseling room. And they said, "Son, have you really been saved?" He said, "Oh, yes. Yes, I'm saved." "Well, tell us how you got saved." "Well," he said, "I did my part, and He did his part." "Well," they thought, "you know, he doesn't understand that salvation is all by grace. We don't earn it. We don't deserve it." They said, "Say that again." He said, "I did my part, and Jesus did his part." They said, "Son, would you explain that?" He said, "I sure will." He said, "I did the sinning, and He did the saving."

I love that. Hallelujah! He saved us by his grace—by his death, burial and resurrection. That's the gospel. Now my dear friend, you need to understand this. You need to understand this—that our salvation is not fulfilled, until our Lord comes, in a blaze of His glory, to take us home. You see, to have our justification without our glorification will be like having east without west, height without depth. It's incomplete.

B. The Sure Word of Our Lord

But there's something else. There's another proof; there's another proof that our Lord Jesus is coming again. Not only His saving work, but His sure word—His sure word. Look, if you will now, in verse 15: "*For this we say unto you*"—are you watching it?—"by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent"—or precede; literally, it means, "go before"—"*them who are asleep*" (1 Thessalonians 4:15). "Now," Paul says, "there's the saving work of our Lord—the gospel, Jesus. He died. He was buried. He rose again." It is the historical and

supernatural and theological underpinning and basis of the Second Coming. And then, he says there's His sure word: *"This we say unto you by the word of the Lord."*

Now when you talk about prophecy, may I tell you that our world is full of New Age astrologers, mediums, and soothsayers, and fortunetellers? You know—"Madame Zonga knows all, sees all, hears all. Blow your horn, so I know you're outside." You know these things. All of these people who claim to be prophetic, my friend, they are pathetic. That's what they are. Thank God we have *"a more sure word of prophecy"* (2 Peter 1:19). We're not talking about prophets who are sometimes correct. We're talking about the Word of God that is 100% accurate.

How do we know that Jesus Christ is coming again? What is the assurance? How can we rely? Number one: the saving work of our Lord. The Second Coming is a part of that saving work. And number two: the sure word of our Lord. Bible-believing Christians will always affirm the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as their blessed hope. My friend, one third of the Bible is about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ—if you understand it and interpret it correctly—one third of the Bible. Both the Old and New Testaments, I believe, have more to say about his Second Coming than even about His first coming. And the last verse in the Old Testament, and the last verse and verses in the New Testament, deal with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Sometimes, when we preach on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, there are those who think, "Well, we're just riding some kind of a hobby horse or reading into the Bible some sort of a supernaturalism and sentimentalism."

One preacher who knew the Bible was preaching the Word of God with fervor on the soon coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and one of these liberal preachers came to him and said, "Oh, you can't get that out of the Bible." He said, "You're right. It's in there, mister, and you can't get it out."

It is there and I thank God for the Word of God that tells us that Jesus Christ is coming again. You can rely, you can rely, you can rely—on the certainty of His coming.

II. You Can Rest in the Comfort of His Coming

Secondly, here's the second thing I want you to see: you can rest in the comfort of His coming. You can rest in the comfort of his coming. Remember again that verse 18 says, *"Wherefore comfort one another with these words"* (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

Now what are the events that give us comfort? Why is there such a comfort? Well, let me tell you, dear friend, there are about four events that the Apostle Paul lists here that are going to take place and maybe this afternoon.

A. The Majesty of His Return

Number one: the majesty of His return—the majesty of His return. Look at it here. He

says in verse 16: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Now people try to explain away the Second Coming of Jesus, and they say, “Well, when you die, the angels come for you, and that’s the Second Coming.” Or, “When you get saved, the Lord comes into your heart, and that’s the Second Coming.” Oh, no. Oh, no, my dear friend. The Lord Himself, Jesus Christ, literally is coming back. The Bible tells us, in the first chapter of Acts, *“This same Jesus, which is taken up from you...shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go”* (Acts 1:11).

The central figure in all of this is the Lord Himself. One of these days, He’s going to stand up from His throne, and step from the lofty lights of Heaven’s splendor, and begin His descent toward this earth. The Lord shall descend, and we shall we will see Him, as He comes in the glory of the Father, with all of His holy angels. And my prayer is the prayer of the songwriter, who said,

*And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
the clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
the trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
even so, it is well with my soul.*

HORATIO G. SPAFFORD

Number one in these events: the majesty of his return.

B. The Miracle of Our Resurrection

Number two: the miracle of our resurrection. Look, if you will also now, in verse 16: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). The dead in Christ shall rise first.

Do you have a Christian mama, Christian daddy, brother, sister, child, already gone on? A little baby who died before the age of accountability? The dead in Christ will rise first. There’s coming *a great gettin’ up morning* when our Lord comes. For the Bible says He comes with a shout. What is it? The word for *shout* here is the word for “a command with authority.” It’s not just a noise like a person would make at a football game who is excited, but it is a word of command. And when Jesus Christ comes, the Lord of the living and the dead will usher His command, and it will echo and reverberate through the tombs.

I don’t know what He will say. Perhaps He’ll say what He said at the gravesite of Lazarus: “Come forth.” My dear friend, at his command, from the sea and from the land, bodies are resurrected and changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, like unto His glorious body; and, those spirits of our departed dead who are already with our Lord Jesus, who will come with Him, will be reunited with their bodies. What a glorious day that will be! And the winding sheets of the desert will give up the dead that are in them.

The great oceans of this earth will swell and heave up the dead which are in them, and battlefields like Shiloh over here, and others, will give up the dead that are in them. Every graveyard will look like a plowed field as our Lord comes, and *“the dead in Christ shall rise first”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

John Phillips, who was here at our Bible conference, gave a wonderful illustration at this point. He talks about the caterpillar, and he says, “You know, nature has given us a wonderful illustration. There’s the caterpillar, that earthbound grub, whose life is just as circumscribed by the life that it lives—a very small world. It nibbles away on some leaf, and every now and then looks up and lifts up its eyes, its head toward the sky. But it has no hope; it has no idea that it will ever be more than a caterpillar. And then, in a change akin to death, something happens to that earthbound grub. It crawls into sort of a self-made coffin. It begins to weave a shroud around itself, and it goes into that coffin, into that shroud, and it dies as it were to this world. And there, the caterpillar just sleeps, careless of the world. And then, one day, there comes to that little creature a mysterious resurrection call. And it begins to burst its coffin apart, and it comes forth in a blaze of glory, and it’s no longer, boys and girls, a caterpillar. Now it is a gorgeous butterfly. It has been through a metamorphosis: a changed form. And it spreads those shimmering wings, and begins to fly and circle up into the sky, bright as the morning, fair as the day—a butterfly. The same creature, and yet, gloriously and wonderfully changed, as it soars into the sky. What a picture of our resurrection! He takes these vile bodies and changes them like unto his glorious body at the Rapture of the Church.

C. **The Mystery of the Rapture**

So first of all, there is, my dear friend, the majesty of his return; and then, secondly, there is the miracle of our resurrection; and then, there is the mystery of the Rapture.

Look, if you will, in verse 17, now, of this same chapter: *“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds”* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). First, the dead are raised, and then, every living person when Jesus Christ comes. And I believe that most of the people in this generation will be alive when Jesus comes. Of course, I could be wrong. May I tell you that even the Apostle Paul in his day was expecting Christ—because he didn’t say, “those”; he said, “we”: *“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together.”*

Now look at the word *caught up*. That’s the word we get our word *rapture* from. Now the word *rapture* in English is not found in the Bible, but the Latin word *rapto* means, “caught up.” And so that’s why we call it the *Rapture*. It’s just simply a Latin designation of what the Apostle Paul here calls *a catching up*.

It’s interesting, Dr. Wuest, who is a Greek scholar, tells us this word *caught up* is used in different places in the Bible, and gives us some idea of what’s going to happen

when the saints are raptured. For example, it's used to mean someone who's caught away speedily. For example, in Acts chapter 8 and verse 39, remember the story of the Ethiopian eunuch, and Philip out there in the desert, and the Bible says, "and the Spirit of the Lord caught him away?" (Acts 8:39). He just disappeared. That's what's going to happen to us—"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52). We're caught up speedily.

It also means, "to seize by force." You can read there, in John chapter 6 and verse 15, where the Lord Jesus was there, and He had performed a miracle, and the people wanted to seize Him by force, and make Him a king (John 6:15). We're going to be seized by force, when our Lord comes. That means neither the grave nor gravity can hold us down.

Dear friend, it also means, "to move to a new place." In 2 Corinthians chapter 12, when the Apostle Paul was caught up into the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2), it's the same word that is used. We're going to be transported to Heaven. "This world is not my home; I'm just passing through."

And then also, it means, "to rescue from danger." When the Apostle Paul, in Acts chapter 23, was about to be pulled apart by warring factions and by mobs, the Bible says they came, and they caught Paul and drew him to safety (Acts 23:24). And we're going to be caught up and drawn away to safety from the Great Tribulation that is coming on this earth.

"Now why did you call it the *mystery* of the Rapture?" Because the Apostle Paul calls it a mystery. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 51, he said, "*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed...*"—I've often thought that would be a good verse to put over there in the nursery—"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (1 Corinthians 15:51). Oh, what a day that's going to be—just caught up to meet our Lord in the air!

I think a good illustration of this may be—a very simple illustration—would be, if you were to take some metal, just go to the scrap yard and get all kinds of metal—some lead and zinc and iron and copper—and then, go to the jeweler and get some gold and silver and platinum and so forth, and put it on the ground. You could bury some of it beneath the ground—beneath the surface, if you wished. And then, put a giant electromagnet, and let it pass over that field of scrap metal. You know what would happen? Some of the metal beneath the ground, and metal on top of the ground, would leap up to meet that magnet. The zinc would not. The lead would not. The copper would not. The gold would not. The silver would not. But the iron would. And do you know why the iron would? It has the same nature as that magnet. And dear friend, those of you who share the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, those of you who have become

partakers of the divine nature, are going to be caught up when He comes. If you're Heaven-born, you'll be Heaven-bound, when Jesus comes again. And I'm so excited about that.

D. **The Marvel of Our Reunion**

You see, there is, my dear friend, first of all, the return; and then, the resurrection; and then, the Rapture; and then, the reunion—the reunion. Look again, if you will, in verse 17: *“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air”* (1 Thessalonians 4:17); together—together. You see, they were worried about their loved ones. They had sorrow about their loved ones. And what he says is this: “We are going to be caught up together. We’re going to have a heavenly homecoming.” That’s the reason it’s such a word of comfort.

Dr. Robert G. Lee used to pastor this church, and, you know, he was a preacher without parallel, and greatly used of the Lord. But he used to tell a story that was one of the most moving things that I’ve ever heard. As he told this story, he said, “You know, I and my mother were very close.” He said, “We lived on a very poor farm,” and, in typical R. G. Lee style, he said, “It was so poor you couldn’t raise an umbrella on it.” And he said, “Much less a mortgage.” And he said, “One day,” he said, “the family was in town, except for myself and my mother. We were sitting on the porch. She was in a rocking chair.” He said, “I was down on the floor of that porch, just a lad with my head, my face, in my hands, my heels sticking up in the air.”

He said, “I looked over at my mother’s hands, and they were timeworn and gnarled.” He said, “I asked my mother a question. I said, ‘Mother, would you tell me the happiest day of your life?’” And he said, “My mother said, ‘Well, son. You’ve asked a hard question.’” He said, “I waited for the answer.” He said, “I thought maybe it would be the day when my dad, who was a tall six-footer with dark eyes, spoke to her, and told her of his undying love. But she didn’t mention that.” He said, “I thought maybe it might be the time over there by the garden gate when he looked at her and asked her to be his bride, but she didn’t tell me that.” He said, “I thought maybe it might have been that time over in the corner of the farm, when in that farmhouse, when they became husband and wife, and lived that way for 50 years, until God called my daddy home. But she didn’t say that.

She said, ‘Son, you’ve asked a hard question.’ But she said, ‘Son, in the war between the North and the South, it brought heartache. It brought separation. It brought depravation and tears.’ She said, ‘The only salt that we had was the salt that we scraped up from the smokehouse floor.’ She said, ‘The only tea that we had was tea that we made from sassafras. The only coffee that we had was from roasted corn. Those were hard days. The men were all off at war.’ She said, ‘I joined your

grandmother and my mother. We ladies, we women, worked out in the fields. And your granddaddy was off at war.'

Then, she said, 'Son, one day, the news came that Granddaddy Bennett was lost at war, that he had died. My daddy, your granddaddy, was dead.' She said, 'As a little girl, my mother was so important to me. I watched to see if my mama would cry.' But she said, 'My mama didn't say much at all. She didn't cry,' she said, 'except at night. I could hear her, and she would bury her face in the pillow, and sob her heart out.' She said, 'As a little girl, one day, I was sitting on the porch with my mama in the cabin down by the old river road, and,' she said, 'my mama was sitting there, snapping and stringing beans.' And said, 'There was a figure that came walking down the river road, and my mother, your grandmother, said, "Elizabeth, I declare, but that man walks like your daddy." Then, after a while, she said, "Elizabeth, don't think it strange, but honey, that man looks like your daddy." And I said, 'Now mama, Daddy's dead. They've told us Daddy is dead, and all the hoping and all the wishing can't bring him back. But after a while, she stood up and threw those beans all over that porch and said, "Elizabeth, that's your daddy." She gathered up her skirt, and began to run down the old river road. He was there. One arm was missing. The sleeve was pinned up, but," he said, "I watched as he put that other arm around her, and held her up close. And they cried, and they laughed, and they cried, and they laughed."

Dr. Lee's mama said, "I ran as fast as my little girlish legs would take me, and I hugged my daddy around the knees, and I reached my hand up in that empty sleeve, and felt that funny little knob, what was left of that arm. And then, she said, 'I think that was the happiest hour I ever knew.'" Dr. Lee said, "My mother's happiest hour is but a small joy compared to seeing the face of Jesus Christ." And I want to say *amen*.

Oh, my dear friend, but a small token of seeing the face of Jesus and His pierced hands, which open up the gates of grace till we shall stand at the gates of glory. My dear friend, some of you have lost loved ones, and they won't come home—not in this world. But there is a homecoming. We'll be caught up to meet them in the air, and we'll sing and shout and dance about. The Lamb will dry our tears, and we'll have a grand homecoming week, the first 10,000 years.

And so what is the comfort of His coming? What is he saying? Well, when our Lord comes, there's going to be the majesty of His return. There's going to be the miracle of our resurrection. There's going to be, my dear friend, the mystery of the Rapture. There's going to be, oh, the marvel of our reunion, as we are brought together—all of the saints of all the ages swept up to meet our Lord in the sky.

III. You Need to Respond to the Challenge of His Coming

Now there's a third thing I want to say and I'll be finished. I have talked to you, my dear

friend, and told you that you should rely on the certainty of His coming. We know He's coming, because of his death, burial, and resurrection, and because of the Word of the Lord. Secondly, you can rest in the comfort of His coming. A heartache here, a tear here, a sorrow here, yes; but Jesus is coming. And then, last of all, my dear friend, you need to respond to the challenge of His coming.

Notice what it says here in verse 17: *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds"*—now, watch it—*"to meet the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17)—*"to meet the Lord."* Do you see that? That word *meet* is not just speaking of a casual meeting. It is the word that is used for the meeting of a returning ambassador. It speaks of a royal welcome. It speaks of going out to meet someone with fanfare. We're going to meet our Lord. He is the King, and we are the ambassadors, and we will meet Him.

The Bible says, *"We are ambassadors for Christ"* (2 Corinthians 5:20). And every mother's child here that knows the Lord, at that day, will give an account of his stewardship—how we have represented our King of kings and Lord of lords. When Jesus is coming I do not know. But I know that Jesus may come today. The songwriter said,

*It may be at morn, when the day is awaking,
When sunlight through darkness and shadow is breaking...
It may be at midday, it may be at twilight,
It may be, perchance, that the blackness of midnight
Will burst into light and the blaze of His glory,
When Jesus receives His own.*

—H. L. TURNER

But you know, there's something in my heart that challenges me: that is, I may meet Jesus 15 seconds from now. You may meet Jesus before we say *amen* to this message, and not get a chance to say *amen*. In these messages on Bible prophecy, may I tell you, there is no prophecy that needs to be fulfilled, before Jesus comes for His Church.

The great Bible expositor, G. Campbell Morgan said, "I never lay my head on the pillow without thinking that perhaps before I awake, the final morning may have dawned. I never begin work without thinking that He may interrupt it to begin His own." And Massillon, the great historian, said this: "In the days of primitive Christianity, it would have been apostasy not to sigh for the return of the Lord." I mean, if you are not waiting, longing, yearning, praying for our Lord to come.

Dear old Mrs. Breck who, like Fanny Crosby, was blind with her natural eyes, had an uncanny sense, when she wrote these words:

Face to face with Christ my Savior,

*Face to face—what will it be...
Face to face in all His glory,
I shall see Him by and by!*

—CARRIE E. BRECK

We're going to meet Him, and what a challenge that is. And when He comes, I want my heart to be warm. I want to be living and walking in purity and holiness. I don't want to be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Jesus gave a solemn warning. Listen to Mark 8 and verse 38, and I want everyone in this building to give me your fullest attention. Here's what Jesus said: *"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words before this sinful and adulterous generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of the father with the holy angels"* (Mark 8:38). Jesus, in that passage, said, "If you're ashamed of Me, I'll be ashamed of you." But Jesus said, oh, my dear friend, "If you'll confess Me, I'll confess you to my Father" (Matthew 10:32). "Two will be in the field;"—Jesus said in Luke—"one will be taken, the other left. Two will be grinding at the mill; the one will be taken, the other left" (Luke 17:35–36). His coming is imminent. All the New Testament writers exhort us to be watching for, to be waiting for, to be looking for, to be praying for, to be hastening unto, and expecting at any moment, the coming of Jesus Christ.

The Comfort of His Coming

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 21, 1991

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:18

Outline

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Introduction

Turn, please, to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. We’re in a series of messages on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ under the general heading, “Our Coming King.” And He is coming. And I praise His name that He is coming. As we have said, we should be living as though He died yesterday, rose this morning, and were coming back this afternoon. Well, indeed, He could come this afternoon. I hope that the idea of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ will stir your heart as we’re in this series of messages taken from 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

Now let me give you the background for this scripture. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, the people at Thessalonica had become confused. They were confused, because the Lord Jesus had promised that He would come again. The Apostle Paul had taught these Christians that Jesus Christ was coming. They were expecting Christ in their lifetime, and they were saying, “At any moment, our Lord will come.” In the interval, some in their midst had died. They had laid in the warm earth some of their loved ones. And they said, “They have missed the Second Coming of Jesus. They will not be here, they have died.” They did not understand all the facts that you and I understand about the Second

Coming of our Lord.

Look, in verse 13 of 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, and you will get the idea: *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope”* (1 Thessalonians 4:13). The word *sleep* here is the Bible word for the death of a Christian. Because, just as sleep has its waking, we have our resurrection.

In verse 13, you have the three problems that these people in Thessalonica faced and many people today face. What are those three problems? First, ignorance; second, sorrow; and, third, hopelessness. All of those are right there in verse 13. Paul is writing now to deal with that ignorance, and sorrow, and hopelessness. Somebody has well said that sorrow looks back, worry looks around, but faith looks up. What Paul is doing now is going to take these people who have been looking backward, and looking around, and refocus their attention. He’s going to tell them about the Rapture of the Church, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes for His own. He is going to tell them that our Lord will return soon, and that those who have died, the dead in Christ, will be raised from the dead. Those who are living will be changed, and transformed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Together, they will be *“caught up...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord”* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Look at the way he concludes this chapter—verse 18: *“Wherefore”—on the basis of that—“comfort one another with these words”* (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Therefore, I have entitled our Bible study, “The Comfort of His Coming.”

I don’t know of a more comforting hope than the Rapture of the Church. There is going to be, my dear friend, a heavenly homecoming. If you have a Mom or a Dad who has died and gone on, who knew the Lord—a brother, a sister, a little baby that died before the age of accountability, whomever it may be—there is going to be a heavenly homecoming. And that’s what we’re talking about now: “The Comfort of His Coming.” There are three things I pray God the Holy Spirit will emblazon upon your conscience today, three things He will rivet to your soul, three truths, unshakable, that I hope, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to plant in your heart and mind, as we look at 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verses 13 through 18.

I. You Can Rely on the Certainty of His Coming

The first is this: You can rely upon the certainty of His coming. Now that is the way the Apostle Paul begins this answer to their ignorance, sorrow, and hopelessness. Notice, in verse 14, he says: *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a*

shout” (1 Thessalonians 4:14–16).

A. **The Saving Work of Our Lord**

Here, the Apostle Paul is giving them two great arguments—two great evidences, two great propositions—that make it an unshakable truth that we can rely upon, with great confidence: our Lord’s coming again. The first is the gospel itself. Look, in verse 14: “*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again...*”—now, the word *if* literally means “since”—“*[Since] we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*” (1 Thessalonians 4:14). So first we have assurance. We have confidence by the saving work of our Lord. That is what Jesus was doing, when He died and rose again.

The gospel, the Bible says, is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. That is the gospel. That is how we are saved. We are saved by the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus literally came to this earth, He literally died, He was literally buried, and He was literally raised again from the dead. We believe that,

*Living, he loved me; dying, he saved me;
Buried, he carried my sins far away;
Rising, he justified freely, for ever:
One day he’s coming—O, glorious day!*
—J. WILBURN CHAPMAN

That is the gospel: that Christ died for our sins.

Now I’m going to tell you, my dear friend, what that has to do with the Second Coming, in just a moment. Let me just put this in your heart. That is the gospel: nothing else, nothing but, nothing plus, but that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and we are saved by His grace, because He paid it all on the cross.

I heard about a little boy who got saved in a particular church, and they wanted to question him before baptism to make certain he really understood. And they said, “Son, are you saved?” He said, “Yes, I am.” They said, “Well, how did you get saved?” “Well,” he said, “I did my part, and Jesus did His part.” Well, that didn’t sound just right, because we know that salvation is the full work of the Lord Jesus, there is nothing that we do. They said, “How’s that again, son?” He said, “I did my part, and He did His part.” They said, “Son, would you mind explaining that?” He said, “I sure will.” He said, “I did the sinning, and He did the saving.” Boy, I love that. My dear friend, we provide the sinner, and God provides the Savior, in Christ dying for our sins.

How do we know that He is coming again? Because, He has already suffered, bled, and died for us. He has already been raised from the dead. You see, my dear friend, unless He comes again for us, unless there is a translation, then the gospel is

incomplete. You see, His crucifixion without His coronation is incomplete. It is like having east without west. It is like having up without down. It is like having dark without light. I mean, it is incomplete without the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Do you believe that Jesus rose again? Well, if you believe that Jesus rose again, then His resurrection is a token, a proof of your resurrection.

In the Old Testament, they had a ceremony called the *First Fruits*. Now what would happen is this: When the harvest would begin to ripen, they would go out into the field and find a sheaf of wheat or grain, and would cut it. Then, they would carry it to Jerusalem, and lay it on the altar—number one, as a thanks to God for the harvest that was coming; number two, as a token that all the harvest belonged to God. They had a celebration. That was the feast of the *First Fruits*. That was the first ripening grain. Later on in the harvest, they would come back to Jerusalem, when the harvest was in, to celebrate the fact that the whole harvest was in. That first ripening grain was a token of all the grain that would ripen. What the Bible says is in 1 Corinthians 15:22: *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming”* (1 Corinthians 15:22–23).

Do you see it? There is going to be a resurrection, because Christ's resurrection is the first fruit of our resurrection. Did Jesus come literally out of that grave? You'd better believe it. Am I coming literally out of the grave? You'd better believe it. You want to know what the harvest is going to be like? Look at the first fruits: *“Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming”* (1 Corinthians 15:23). So this is the argument of the Apostle Paul. He says, *“We believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him”* (1 Thessalonians 4:14). The dead in Christ shall rise, just as our Lord has risen.

The Lord Christ allowed Himself to be taken by death. It was all a part of a plan. The Lord Jesus Christ was taken, a mangled, bloodied body from that cross. He was taken a corpse, and put in a sealed tomb. Death, that monarch of terrors, waved his black banner in victory. It looked as though death were supreme, and a sigh ran down through the tombs of the patriarchs. A wail of woe ran through all the sepulchers of the war of the world. The Son of God lay dead there in that tomb. Jesus had permitted Himself to be taken captive by death that He might lead captivity captive. And the Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God had gone into that grave to undermine the foundation of death and to kindle the star of hope in the grave. The Lord Jesus rose up from the dead. The Lord Jesus Christ took the sting from death. The Lord Jesus Christ took the crown from death, and broke that crown. The Lord Jesus took the keys from death. As a risen, living, victorious Savior, the Bible says; because He lives, we will live (1 Corinthians 15:12–23).

B. The Sure Word of Our Lord

Now my dear friend, that is the historical and supernatural basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. I believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as real, as literal as His first coming. I believe in my resurrection, as real and literal as His. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so. That is the first assurance that I have. The first assurance is the saving work of our Lord. The second assurance is the sure word of our Lord. Look, in verse 15: *“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord”* (1 Thessalonians 4:15).

Now you have history, and you have the Bible. Jesus suffered, bled, died, and rose again. We also have the Holy Scripture, the prophecy that cannot be broken. What I am saying is not some guess, not some surmise; it is the Word of God. One third of all the Bible, properly understood, speaks of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament end with a promise that Jesus Christ is coming again. Over and over, by the Word of the Lord, we know that Jesus Christ is coming again. We live in a day that is full of all kinds of so-called prophets, new-agers, astrologers, mediums, seers, and fortunetellers. They are not prophetic; they are pathetic—all of them. None of them are ever always correct. Sometimes, with the help of Satan, they may have an educated guess, but even Satan doesn't know the future. Thank God for the more sure word of prophecy, the Bible, that is always 100% correct.

One preacher was preaching on the Second Coming of Jesus, and there was a cynic out there who did not believe in this blessed hope. The cynic said to that preacher, “You can't get that out of the Bible.” The preacher said, “You're right, it's in there, and you can't get it out.”

My dear friend, there are two things that give us this assurance: number one, the saving work of our Lord; number two, the sure word of our Lord.

II. You Can Rest in the Comfort of His Coming

That is what the Apostle Paul is saying, so put it down: first, you can rely upon the certainty of His coming; number two, you can rest in the comfort of His coming. You can rest in it. Paul ends this passage, in verse 18, by saying, *“Wherefore comfort one another with these words”* (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Sometimes some people preach the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to threaten and to frighten. And we ought to be threatened by it, if we are not ready. We ought to be frightened, if we are not ready. This particular passage is written not to threaten, not to frighten, but to comfort: *“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”* And what the apostle does is to give us a scenario. He gives us an outline of what is going to happen at the Rapture, when our Lord comes. There are four basic events that lead to great comfort.

A. The Majesty of His Return

First, the majesty of His return. Now may I tell you, dear friend, that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the central figure here. Look, in verse 16: *“For the Lord himself shall descend”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). I love that. Don’t try to spiritualize this; don’t try to explain it away. The Bible says, *“The Lord himself.”* Acts 1:11 says, *“This same Jesus, which is taken up from you”* (Acts 1:11). The same Jesus that fed the five thousand, the same Jesus that, in sandaled feet, walked the shores of Galilee. This same Jesus, *“the Lord himself.”*

Sometimes people say, “Well, the Second Coming of Jesus is when you die, and the Lord comes for your spirit, and you go to Heaven.” Well, that is wonderful, but that is not the Second Coming of Jesus. Or, some people say, “Well, the Second Coming of Jesus is when you are born again, and He comes in to live you.” That is wonderful, but that is not the Second Coming. The Bible says, *“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). There is, my dear friend, the majesty of His return. One day our Lord shall rise from His throne, and step from the lofty heights of Heaven’s splendor, and begin His descent down toward this earth. The Lord shall descend. And He will come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels. I love when we sing,

*Lord, haste the day when our faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.*

—HORATIO G. SPAFFORD

And so the very first thing: Jesus our Lord, literally, actually, visibly, is coming back, just as real, just as certain, as His first coming. *“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven.”*

B. The Miracle of Our Resurrection

Second event that gives us comfort: not only the majesty of His return, but the miracle of our resurrection. We are going to be raised. Notice verse 16: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Now friend, there are the signs of His coming; but, right now, I’m listening for the sounds. There are three sounds. First, there is a shout; and then, there is the voice of the archangel; and then, there is the trump of God. The word for *shout* here is the word that means “command.” It is not just a shout, like someone should shout at a football game; it is more than a shout of victory. It is an authoritarian shout. Our Lord is going to come with a shout.

Now what He will say, I don’t know. I will tell you what I think he will say. I think He

has prefigured and previewed this, in John chapter 11, when Lazarus was raised from the dead. And Jesus said, “*Lazarus, come forth*” (John 11:43). And I believe the shout will be this: “Come forth!” And all the sleeping dead in Christ will hear the voice of the Son of God, and the Savior’s voice will reverberate through Satan’s kingdom of death, and bring it crashing down. At the command of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the sea will give up from its heaving bosom the dead that were in it. And the winding sheets of the desert will deliver up those dead that are there. And my dear friend, the battle fields, like Shiloh over here in Tennessee, and others, will give up the dead that are buried there. Every graveyard may look like a plowed field, when our Lord comes with that shout: “Come forth!” And the dead will come forth.

Also there is the voice of the archangel. Who is the archangel? Michael, I believe. Daniel tells us that. Why is he brought into play here? Well, you know the Bible calls Satan “*the prince of the power of the air*” (Ephesians 2:2). Satan is a fallen angel, and Michael, still his superior at that time, will say to all of the demons, and the prince of the power of the air, “Give way, and make way for the children of God, the saints, as they go up to meet our Lord in the air.”

And then, the trumpet will sound. Trumpets were very important in Israel, in times past. Trumpets were sounded primarily for two things: for worship, and warfare. My dear friend, the saints will be caught up to the throne to worship. The great tribulation war will begin here on this earth, and the horrors of the great tribulation. Our Lord shall descend with a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. There will be, my dear friend, the miracle of our resurrection.

You say, “Adrian, do you really believe in a miraculous resurrection?” Of course. “Well,” you say, “aren’t you educated? Don’t you understand that is beyond our understanding?” Well, friend, the fact that you are here to begin with is beyond your understanding. I mean, God made everything out of nothing, isn’t that right? You don’t even understand the human birth. If God can make you out of nothing, and form you in a womb, dear friend, He can raise you from a tomb out of something. Don’t you worry about it. The same God, who is the miracle God, is going to raise the dead. We are going to be raised.

John Phillips has reminded us that the grub, the little caterpillar, is a picture of the resurrection. That little grub, that little repulsive caterpillar, who feeds upon a leaf, and lives in a world that is very circumscribed, so small—every now and then, it just lifts its head up, and looks into the blue sky, and then goes back to the world it knows, the earthbound world. One day, something very much like a death takes place in the life of that caterpillar. He begins to make a shroud for himself; he begins to make a little miniature coffin for himself. And he crawls up into that coffin. Wrapped in that shroud, as it were, he dies to the world that he has known. He sleeps oblivious to all that’s going on

around him. Then, one day, a resurrection call comes, and he bursts that coffin asunder, and he comes out—this time, not a caterpillar, but a glorious, shimmering butterfly—bright as the sun, fair as the morn. He begins to wing his way up into the blue sky. Is he the same creature? Yes, but a different creature, because he has gone through a metamorphosis, a change of form.

The Bible says, “*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52). The Bible also says, “[*He*] shall change our vile body...like unto his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). I agree with the Psalmist when he says, “*I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness*” (Psalms 17:15). You say, “Pastor, what are you going to be like in the resurrection?” I’m going to be like Jesus. You say, “Well, explain that to me.” I can’t explain it to you. My dear friend, I’ll like it, and so will you. We are going to be like the Lord Jesus.

C. The Mystery of the Rapture

So what is this comfort? Well, first, dear friend, there is the majesty of His return—the Lord himself shall descend from heaven. Then, there is the miracle of our resurrection—the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then, there is the mystery of the Rapture. The Bible says, “We which remain in our life shall be caught up with them” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The Apostle Paul was expecting Christ in his lifetime, because he said *we* not *you*: “We which remain.” There are going to be millions of people on Earth alive when Jesus Christ comes, living saints who will be changed, as the Apostle Paul said, “*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump*” (1 Corinthians 15:52). When Jesus comes, when the shout comes, all of those who are saved will be changed instantaneously, and be caught up in the air to meet the Lord. We call this the *Rapture*. The word *rapture* itself is not found in the Bible, but don’t let that bother you. The word *trinity* is not found. The word *missions* is not found. The word *sovereignty* is not found. These are all doctrines that are found in the Bible. The word *rapture* is called *rapture*, because the Latin word *rapto* means, “to seize,” or “to catch up.” They have just simply taken the Latin form, and given a very beautiful word: *rapture*.

If you don’t like the word *rapture*, just use *being caught up*. This great word was used, Mr. Wuest tells us, in many ways, in the Bible. For example, it means, “to seize with force.” They were about to seize the Lord Jesus, and try to make a king out of Him, and the Bible says they would seize Him by force. It’s the same word. You see, when the Rapture comes, you and I are going to be seized by force. That force is our Lord, and neither the grave nor gravity will be able to hold us down. I like that.

It means, “to take from one place, and put in another place.” The Apostle Paul used this word, when he said he was caught up into the third heaven. He was taken out of this sphere. He was put into another sphere. That is what the Rapture is going to be.

We are going to be taken from this place. We are going to be put in another place.

It means, “to deliver from danger.” For example, in the 17th chapter of Acts, it tells of a riot over the Apostle Paul. They were pulling him this way and that way. There were some soldiers who came and took Paul and pulled him into safety. The Church is going to be taken out of this world into safety. The Church is going to be taken out of this world into a safe haven, where the horrors of the tribulation take place here on this earth. We are going to be caught up in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. The Bible calls this the *Rapture*, and I am so excited about the fact that it could happen at any moment.

Now the Bible calls it a mystery. You say, “I don’t understand it.” Well, the Apostle Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 51: “*Behold, I shew you a mystery*” (1 Corinthians 15:51), then he describes the Rapture. And it is the mystery of the Rapture; it is going to happen. You say, “That smacks of supernaturalism.” Yes sir. Our whole faith is a supernatural faith. And you’d better believe that.

Let me give you an illustration. If you were to take many bits of metal, if you were to take some copper, lead, zinc, chromium, and some iron; then, go to the jewelry store, and get some platinum, some gold, and some silver; then, you would scatter it all over the ground in a field, and let the weeds grow over it—perhaps you would bury some of it beneath the surface; then, take a giant electromagnet, and swing it over that field, some of that metal would leap up; some would come right through the dirt, and leap up, and cling to that magnet. What metal would go up? The zinc wouldn’t; the lead wouldn’t; the copper wouldn’t; the gold, the silver, the platinum would not. What would go up? The iron. Why? Because the iron has the same nature as the magnet. And that’s why the attraction is there. Friend, when Jesus Christ comes, those who share His nature are going to be caught up.

You see, the Bible says we have become “*partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4). And *if you are heaven-born, you will be heaven-bound.*

D. The Marvel of Our Reunion

If the Lord Jesus Christ lives in you, there comes, dear friend, the majesty of His return. There comes the miracle of our resurrection. There comes, dear friend, the mystery of the Rapture. We are caught up. We are changed. Along with the dead, the living are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And then, last, there comes, dear friend, the marvel of our reunion. Look in verse 17: “*Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air*” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Now look at the word *together*. We will be caught up together—together. You see, they were worrying about the dead, who had already died. Paul said, “Oh, listen, we’re

going together. Your mom, your dad, your brother, your sister, your baby, together we're going to go and meet the Lord. There is going to be a reunion; there is going to be a homecoming in the sky."

The former pastor of our church, Dr. Robert G. Lee, was a gifted preacher. One of the stories that he told that moves my heart deeply, is this: He said, when he was a little boy, "We lived on a farm, and it was so poor we couldn't even raise an umbrella on it, much less the mortgage." Then, he said, "One day, when everybody had gone to town, I was on the front porch with my mother. She was sitting on a rocking chair, knitting. I was down on the floor of that porch, with my face in my hands, and my heels up in the air. And I looked at those worn hands of my mother, and I asked her, 'Mother, what was the happiest day you have ever known in your life?' I thought perhaps she would say it was that day when my daddy, who was a tall six-footer with dark eyes, spoke to her of his love for her. But she didn't mention that. Or I thought perhaps it would be that time when down by the garden gate he asked her to be his wife on a moonlit night. But she didn't say that was the happiest day. I thought perhaps she might say it was that day when, on the corner of the farm, they took one another to be husband and wife and lived that way for 50 years together, until God called him home. But that wasn't it.

She said, 'Son, you've asked a hard question. But in the War Between the States, times were hard and bitter. All the men went off to war. My daddy went off to war—your granddaddy. We didn't have much on the farm. We got our salt from scraping the smokehouse floor. We got our tea from sassafras, coffee from parched corn. And as a little girl, I went out and worked with the women in the fields, just to try and keep the things together. Those were hard days. And then, news came that your granddaddy—my daddy, Bennett—had been killed in the war. I watched my mama. I wondered what she would say or do. She didn't seem to say much. She didn't seem to cry; she just didn't say much at all. I wondered why she didn't speak. But my bedroom was close to hers. And at nighttime, I would hear my mama, as she would put her face in the pillow, and cry her heart out through the night. The next day, she would wipe her tears, and go about her business."

"Son, one day I was sitting on the porch, very much like we're doing today, by my mother, and she had a bowl of beans in her hands. She was snapping and stringing those beans. The farmhouse was by the old river road, and we were sitting there. My mother looked up, and saw a man walking down the old river road. And my mother said, 'Elizabeth, that man sure does walk like your daddy used to walk.' She kept on snapping those beans, and after a while she said, 'Elizabeth, I declare that man sure does look like your daddy.' And I said to my mama, 'Now mama, daddy's dead. And I wish we could bring him back, but we can't; and there's no need for you to disturb yourself like this.' But after a while, she just jumped up and threw those beans in the air,

and said, 'That's your daddy! That's your daddy!' She gathered up her skirt, and ran across the yard, and down the old river road, and fell into the arm—not arms, but arm—of her husband, because one of the arms had been severed, and the sleeve was pinned up, and he took that other arm, and put it around her. And they kissed and hugged, and they laughed and wept, and kissed and hugged."

Dr. Lee's mother said, as a little girl, "I ran across the yard as fast as my childish feet could carry me, and I went there, and I got my daddy by the knees, and then ran my hand up that empty sleeve, and felt that funny little arm there. And I declare, I believe it was the happiest day of my life, when my daddy came home from the war."

Then, Dr. Lee said this: "My mother's happiest hour is but a small joy compared to seeing the face of Jesus, and His pierced hands, which opened the gates of grace till we shall stand at the gates of glory."

Oh, my dear friend, what a homecoming there will be! What a homecoming! Together we are going to meet the Lord, we will sing, and dance, and shout. Oh, my dear friend, what a homecoming we will have!

III. You Need to Respond to the Challenge of His Coming

Then, there's a third thing I want you to notice. Not only, dear friend, can you rely upon the certainty of His coming. And not only can you rest in the comfort of His coming. We need to respond with all of our heart, dear friend, to the challenge of His coming. Look, in verse 17: "*Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds,*"—look at this next phrase—"*to meet the Lord*" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Do you ever think about meeting the Lord? Do you? Is that a challenge to you? This word *meet* does not speak of a casual meeting; it is a word that would be used to go out and greet and meet a returning ambassador. It is a technical word that would be used to welcome a returning dignitary, where you would go out with an entourage to meet and greet him. That is the word that says here, we are going to *meet* the Lord.

Now He is the King, and we are going to meet Him, because He is returning. We are ambassadors for Christ. One of these days, soon and very soon, I am going to give an account. What a challenge the Second Coming of Jesus is!

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

—EDWARD MOTE

Conclusion

Are you ready for Jesus Christ to come? Are you ready for the Rapture? Are you

saved? Are you ready as a Christian to say, “Lord Jesus, I have loved You, I have served You, I have witnessed, I have been faithful.” When He comes, I don’t want Him to come to find His tithe in my bank account. I don’t want Him to come to find liquor in the cabinet, pornography in my living room. I don’t want Him to come to find hatred in my heart. I don’t want Him to come to find me cold and indifferent. I want to be on fire for Jesus. I’m going to meet Him, and meet Him soon. And so will you.

Will the Church Go Through the Tribulation?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 9, 1980

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:17

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Introduction

Turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, please—1 Thessalonians chapter 4—and look with me in verse 13. We’re thinking on this subject: “Will the Church Go Through the Great Tribulation?” Look at verse 13: *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others [that] have”—or, “which have”—“no hope.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:13) There are three big problems that Paul mentions here in verse 13: one is ignorance; the other is sorrow, and the other is hopelessness. All three of those problems are mentioned in one verse. Ignorance concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and His Second Coming leads to hopelessness, and

hopelessness leads to sorrow. And, a proper understanding of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is a cure not only for ignorance, but is a cure for hopelessness and, therefore, is a cure for sorrow.

And, in the scripture that follows verse 13, you're going to find God's answer to man's ignorance, God's answer to man's sorrow, and God's answer to man's hopelessness. So, continue to read in verse 14, for he says, *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent"*—literally, "shall not proceed"—*"them"*—or, "go before them"—*"which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, [and] with [a] voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."* (1 Thessalonians 4:14–18) Now, there are several things I want you to notice as we look at this passage concerning the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Evidence That Affirms His Coming

And, the first thing I want you to notice is the evidence that affirms His coming. And, Paul mentions two great lines of evidence—one in verse 14 and one in verse 15.

A. The Incomparable Work of Our Lord

The evidence in verse 14 is the incomparable work of our Lord. Notice in verse 14: *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."* (1 Thessalonians 4:14) Now, Paul says one evidence of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. *"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so [Jesus is coming again]."* (1 Thessalonians 4:14) That is, He has already shown us in history that He is a supernatural Savior. He has already proven His great powers, His great ability. His deity has already been shown by His resurrection from the dead. He has already been raised. And, because God has kept that part of His word, we can certainly look forward to God keeping the rest of His word. And, what Paul is saying is that God is not finished yet. We have seen His incarnation. That was His first coming. His second coming is His coronation. And, the incarnation without the coronation would be like east without west. It would be like height without depth. It would be unfinished. We would know that there is something left that needs to be done. Had Jesus just simply come, suffered, bled, and died, and rose again, and that's all, we would say, "It's incomplete." We're standing on tiptoe waiting for the rest of it.

I know that you've heard this story because it's older than most of us—about the man who rented a hotel room, was very tired and weary, sat on the edge of his bed, pulled off his heavy shoe, and dropped it on the floor. And then, he thought, "That was so inconsiderate of me! There's bound to be someone in the room beneath me. So, he took off the other shoe and quietly laid it on the floor and rolled over and went to sleep. About three hours later, the man in the room below came up and knocked on the door and said, "Would you please drop the other shoe?" Now, the entire world is like that: we're waiting for the dropping of the other shoe. We know that He came. We know that He suffered. We know that He bled. We know that He died. We know that He rose. And, because we do, we know He's coming again. You see, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, *"even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."* (1 Thessalonians 4:14) And so, the first line of evidence that affirms His coming is the incomparable work of our Lord.

B. The Infallible Word of Our Lord

But, the second line of evidence that affirms His coming is the infallible Word of our Lord. Look, if you will, in verse 15: *"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent"—or, "precede"—"them [that] are asleep."* (1 Thessalonians 4:15) The Bible-believing Christians down through the ages have had the Word of God for it. Jesus Christ is coming again. And so, that is the evidence that affirms His coming.

II. The Events That Accompany His Coming

Now secondly, I want you to notice the events that accompany His coming. And, what are the events that accompany His coming?

A. The Majesty of His Revelation

Event number one: There's going to be the majesty of His revelation. Look, if you will, in verse 16: *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven."* (1 Thessalonians 4:16) Not the Holy Spirit—He came on the Day of Pentecost, and He is, of course, the Divine Spirit. But, when Paul uses the word "the Lord himself" in this phrase, he's not talking about any other member of the Godhead; He's talking about Jesus, whom he calls the Lord. Paul knows what those angels said in Acts chapter 1, verse 11: *"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing [thus] into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken...from you [up] into heaven, shall so come in like manner as [you] have seen him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:11) Not some event in history; not death, when we die and our spirit goes to be with the Lord; not the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost—but the Lord Himself, literally, actually, visibly, bodily, Jesus is coming back to this earth again. And so, the very first event that we talk about is the majesty of His revelation,

and we shall see our Lord when He comes in the glory of the Father with the holy angels. (Matthew 16:27; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26) And, my prayer and my sentiment is with the songwriter who said, “Lord, haste the day when [our] faith shall be sight, / [And] the [skies] be rolled back as a scroll; / The [trumpet] shall [sound], and [our] Lord shall descend; / Even so, it is well with my soul.” (Horatio G. Spafford)

B. The Miracle of Our Resurrection

But secondly, not only is there going to be the majesty of His revelation; there’s going to be the miracle of our resurrection, for continue to read: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, [and] with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

Now, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes, He’s coming, first of all, with a shout, and this shout comes from His lips. The Lord shall come with a shout. It is Jesus who shouts. Jesus is the Lord of the dead, and He is the Lord of the living. And, as the Lord Jesus Christ echoes this shout throughout all of the world, the tombs of the multiplied saved that know Him will hear Him as He says, “Come forth!” And, they will all come forth as Lazarus came forth that day when Jesus stood before his tomb and said, *“Come forth.”* (John 11:43) He is coming with a shout, and the voice of our dear Savior will roll through the length and the breadth of death’s dark empire and bring it crashing down, for *“the dead in Christ [will] rise first.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16) And, those that are in the sea will come from the sea, and those that are buried on the land will come from the land. And, their bodies will be resurrected and changed in a moment, in an instant, *“like unto his glorious body.”* (Philippians 3:21)

What a day that will be when the deserts will unwrap their winding sheets of sand and the dead who’ve died in the desert will come forth! What a day that will be when the heaving bosom of the ocean will give a swell and give up the dead which were in it! What a day that will be when the battlefields of this world will be denuded of the dead that have been buried in them! Oh, it’s going to be a day when the dead in Christ are going to rise first! And, God is going to set everything right. There are so many inequities in this life. We wonder, “Why are the good caused to suffer? Why do the wicked seem to live high, wide, and handsome?” Friend, it’s not all over yet. There’s coming a resurrection. There is the miracle of His resurrection.

C. The Mystery of the Rapture

Notice the majesty of His revelation, the miracle of our resurrection, and the third event that accompanies His coming is the mystery of the Rapture—the mystery of the Rapture. Notice in verse 17: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17) I call it “the mystery of the Rapture” because

Paul, in another place, calls it a mystery. He says, *“Behold, I shew you a mystery”*—and the Greek word here is *mysterion*. It is a...it is a truth that you could not know apart from divine revelation—*“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound”* (1 Corinthians 15:51–52)—*“and the dead in Christ shall rise first: [And] we which...remain [and are alive] shall be [changed].”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17)

And so, if the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ is the voice that is used to raise the dead, the voice of the archangel is going to cry also at this time. And, why is the archangel going to speak? For the Bible says there’s going to...the Lord is going to *“descend from heaven with a shout, [and] with the voice of the archangel.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16) Who is the archangel? I believe the archangel is going to take the place of the friend of the bridegroom, who runs before the bride just before the bridegroom bursts into that happy wedding scene, and the bride is waiting there with anticipation looking forward to the appearance of her lover. And, I believe as the Lord Jesus comes and shouts, “Come forth,” and the dead rise, I believe the archangel is going, with his face shining like the sun, to shout, *“Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.”* (Matthew 25:6)

And, all of the saints of all of the ages will be instantaneously changed also, and we’ll be swept up into glory to meet the Lord like Enoch, who *“walked with God: and...was not; for God took him.”* (Genesis 5:24) He never tasted of death. Like Elijah, who went to heaven in a whirlwind, a chariot of fire, we’re going to see our Savior face to face. Someone wrote these words:

*“Oh, blessed hope! Perhaps today,
a moment more, and then away,
caught up in the clouds to be with Him,
beyond the reach of convicts grim,
of disappointments, pains, and tears.
Oh, blessed hope! The Rapture nears.”*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

There’s going to be the mystery of the Rapture.

D. The Marvel of Reunion

And then, the next event that will accompany His coming is the marvel of reunion. Notice again in verse 17: *“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:17) We’re going to be caught up together. We’re going to be caught up with them. We’re going to be reunited with our loved ones that we have known and loved through all of the ages.

Tomorrow, we will be going to the funeral of a dear sister who died yesterday. And, so many of us have gone so many times—so many heartbreaking times—to that cemetery. But, I want to tell you, death does not end it all. Death, dear friend, for the body, is just a time of sleep and repose, and the spirit goes to be immediately with the Lord Jesus. But, at that resurrection moment, the body is going to come forth from the grave; the spirit is going to come back from heaven—body and spirit reunited. And, we'll be caught up to meet the Lord together. And, as the songwriter said, "We'll sing and shout and dance about, / The Lamb will dry our tears; / We'll have a grand homecoming week, The first ten thousand years." (Raymond Browning) There's going to be the marvel of our reunion.

III. The Expectancy That Awaits His Coming

Now, the third thing I want you to notice: not only the evidence that affirms His coming and not only the events that accompany His coming, but I want you to notice the expectancy that awaits His coming. Notice again in verses 17 and 18: "*Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we...be with the Lord*"—now, I want you to notice this word of expectancy in verse 18—"*Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:17–18)

Now, that brings me to the point of our message tonight: Will the Church go through the Great Tribulation? There are some who are telling us that we cannot expect the Rapture at any moment. There are some who tell us that we will go through the seven years of the Tribulation and then we will meet our Lord; then, after the Tribulation, we're going to meet the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, dear friend, that is not a lot of comfort. The Bible says, "*Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

Now, the Bible says we're going "*to meet the Lord in the air.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:17) Now, dear friends, this word *meet* is a very interesting word that's found here in verse 17. It's the word for an official greeting. It's the word, for example, that a king might use when an ambassador who's been in a foreign country returns and he gives an account of his stewardship and his ambassadorship in that foreign country. Our Lord is going to come to meet us and to examine us and then to reward us according to the way that we have served Him. And so, we're waiting for that exact moment when we meet the Lord. It may be at any time. I believe there's not one shred of prophecy that needs to be fulfilled ere the Lord Jesus Christ comes back again.

Now, you say, "Brother Rogers, what is the Tribulation anyway?" Well, turn, if you will—leave the passage in 1 Thessalonians—and turn to Matthew chapter 24—Matthew chapter 24—and notice, if you will, in verse 21. Jesus gave the course of the age and the events that would precede His Second Coming. And then, the Lord Jesus Christ

here gives us a very dire warning, and Jesus says here in Matthew chapter 24 and verse 21: *“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”* (Matthew 24:21) And, some people want to tell us that the saints are going through that period of time—a time so terrible and so horrible, as we’re going to see in a moment, that *“men [will] desire to die, and death [will] flee from them.”* (Revelation 9:6)

Now, go back, if you will, to our scripture in 1 Thessalonians chapter 3. Let’s just go back there, and I want you to notice a strange thing: I want you to notice that the saints are taken out of the world. Notice in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4—or, chapter 4—and first of all, I want you to look, if you will, with me in verse 14: *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:14) That is, the saints are going to come with Jesus when He comes. But then, look in verse 16, if you will: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, [and] with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

Now, wait a minute—how are they going to rise first if Jesus is going to bring them with Him? Now, do they rise or do they come with Jesus? The answer is yes, both. You see, there’s no contradiction here. If you read it carelessly, you might think there’s a contradiction. One verse says—verse 14—says when Jesus is coming, the Christians who have died are coming with Him. The next verse says when Jesus comes, the Christians who have died are going to be raised. Remember, friend, it is the body that is raised. The spirit goes immediately to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. And, there’s no conflict. If I...if my body would cease to function right now, I would not die. I can’t die. *“[He that] liveth and [believe] in me shall never die.”* (John 11:26) That’s what Jesus said. He gave me everlasting life, so how could I die? I would just simply move out of this house and move to heaven. You see, this body that I have is called a “house.” It’s an earthly house. In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, it’s called an “earthly house.” (2 Corinthians 5:1)

I tell our Discovery Class about a man named Mr. Peas who died—P-E-A-S. He was a fine Christian. But, someone put on his tombstone *“This ain’t Peas; it’s just the pod. Peas shelled out and went to God.”* Now, that’s exactly what happens. When a Christian dies, he leaves this shell, this body, and he goes immediately into the presence of the Lord. And, it is the body that sleeps in the earth to await the resurrection of the Lord.

But now, the question comes—the question comes—and it is a good question: Will the Church go through the Tribulation? Now, we’re going to leave, pretty much, this passage in 1 Thessalonians, for a moment anyway. But, keep in mind that the Second Coming of Jesus and our translation and the resurrection of the dead is called a blessed hope. Now, keep that in mind—keep that in mind—as we study the rest of these

scriptures. There's several things I want you to notice about the Great Tribulation as we try to answer this question: Will the Church go through the Great Tribulation?

A. The Purpose Designed for the Great Tribulation

The first thing I want you to notice is the purpose designed for the Great Tribulation.

1. To Prepare the Jews to Receive Christ

Turn, if you will please, to Deuteronomy chapter 4, and you're going to find out that one purpose of the Great Tribulation is to prepare the Jews to receive Christ. Did you know that one day, vast, vast numbers of Jews are going to turn to Jesus Christ? They're going to look upon Him whom they pierced, and they're going to mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son. (Amos 8:10; Zechariah 12:10) And, *"a remnant according to the election of grace"* is going to be saved. (Romans 11:5) It's going to become wonderful. It will be wonderful and glorious.

But, notice here in Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 27, as God prophesies what will happen to the Jew: and the Bible says, *"And the LORD shall scatter you"*—now, He's talking to the Jews—*"And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul"*—now, here God anticipates a time when the Jews will turn to the Lord and seek Him with all of their heart and with all of their soul. When is it going to be? Notice in verse 30—*"When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and [shall] be obedient [to] his voice."* (Deuteronomy 4:27–30) In the latter days, the Jews are going to seek the Lord, and the Bible says they're going to seek the Lord when they are in tribulation. (Deuteronomy 4:29–30)

Now, turn again to Jeremiah, the thirtieth chapter, for a moment, and I want you to pick up this same strain of thought—beginning in verse 4: *"And these"*—Jeremiah 30, verse 4—*"And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all [paces]"*—*"all faces"*—*"are turned into paleness?"*—why is it that men are doubled over with pain? Why is it that the color is gone from their faces? He answers in verse 7—*"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it"*—it is the same time that Jesus was talking about: a time of trouble like there never was before. Listen—*"[there's] none...like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble"*—now, Jacob here is the name for fleshly Jews; not necessarily spiritual Jews, but fleshly Jews. It is the time of Jacob's trouble. But,

notice—*“he shall be saved out of it”*—out of what? Out of this tribulation—*“For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off [his] neck, and [I] will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them”*—and “David their king” here is a prophecy not of that first David but David’s greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the greater Son of Jesse—*“Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will [serve] thee”*—*“save thee”*—*“from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return and...be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid”*—now, notice verse 11—*“For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet...will [I] not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in [a] measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.”* (Jeremiah 30:4–11) Now, this scripture...and the key to this scripture is very clear in verse 7: the Great Tribulation is *“the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he [will] be saved out of it.”* (Jeremiah 30:7)

Now, I want you to notice the Jewish characteristic of the Great Tribulation. That’s what I’m showing you. I want you now to turn to Daniel chapter 12—Daniel chapter 12. I don’t hear as many pages. Get with it. All right, verse 1: *“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people”*—now, who’s...who was...to whom was this message given? It was given to Daniel. And, who was Daniel? Daniel was a Jew—*“at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people”*—that is, for the Jews—*“and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”* (Daniel 12:1) It’s a time, the Bible says, again, of God dealing with the Jew and the Jew being saved out of this great tribulation. So, keep Deuteronomy 4, Jeremiah 30, and Daniel 12 in your mind as you think of the Great Tribulation.

2. To Punish the Gentile Nations

But, not only is the purpose of the Great Tribulation to prepare the Jews to receive Christ, but another purpose is to punish the Gentile nations, those Gentiles who spurn the Lord Jesus Christ and who will not serve the Lord. Turn to Isaiah chapter 24 and verse 1 for just a moment: *“Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof”*—when has that ever happened? Not yet, but Isaiah said it will happen—*“And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken [his] word. The*

earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore...the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore [are] the inhabitants of the—“therefore the inhabitants, or the inhabitants, of the”—“*earth are burned, and few men left.*” (Isaiah 24:1–6) Now, here he mentions more than the Jews. Now, he mentions the inhabitants of all of the earth in this great time of tribulation, and he mentions this great worldwide decimation of the population.

Again, turn, if you will, to Jeremiah chapter 25 for a moment. And, I hope that you’ll not be weary with these verses, but I want you to see the purpose of the Great Tribulation. Turn to Jeremiah chapter 25 and verse 30: “*Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations*”—now, he’s not talking about the Jews now. He’s talking about with the heathen, with the pagan—“*he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: [for] they shall not be*”—“*they shall not be*”—“*lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.*” (Jeremiah 24:30–33)

Now, here in these scriptures and other scriptures we could give you, you would see that God seems to have two great purposes in the Great Tribulation: one is to prepare the Jews; the other is to punish the Gentiles—to prepare the Jews and to punish the Gentiles. But, the interesting thing I want you to see is that, in all of these scriptures, the Church is not mentioned—God’s New Testament saints are not mentioned. As a matter of fact, the Church will be taken out beforetime.

Turn to Revelation chapter 4 and verse 1. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, we hear the word *church* mentioned over and over and over again, because Revelation chapters 2 and 3 deal with the Church Age. But, notice in Revelation chapter 4, verse 1: “*After this*”—and the phrase “after this” literally means “after these things”; that is, “after the Church Age”—“*I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.*” (Revelation 4:1) Remember, when the Lord Jesus comes—how did Paul tell us He’s coming? With a shout and with the sound of the trumpet. (1 Thessalonians 4:16) Now, look at this verse here: “*I heard...as*

it were [the voice] of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." (Revelation 4:1) Now, pay attention. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, we read, "the church," "the church," "the church," "the church," "the church," "the church," "the church," "the church," "and the church." Over and over again, God brings messages to the Church. But, from Revelation chapter 4, verse 1 on through the end of the book of the Revelation, the Church is not mentioned any more. And, after this door is opened in heaven, after there's the sound of a trumpet, after the voice says, "Come up hither," then, as we begin to read, we read solemnly of the Tribulation judgment that falls upon the earth as the seven seals of doom are opened and the vials of God's wrath are poured out here upon this world. (Revelation 15:7) But, Jesus promises to keep the Church from the Great Tribulation.

Turn back now to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 for a moment—1 Thessalonians chapter 1. And, I want you to look with me in verses 9 and 10: *"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned [from] God"—"turned to God"—"from idols to serve the living and [the] true God"*—now Paul, in verse 9, is talking about the saints in the church at Thessalonica. And, not only did they turn to God from idols, but what else are they doing? Look in verse 10—*"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus"*—now, notice this next phrase very carefully—*"even Jesus, [who] delivered us from the wrath to come."* (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10)

Now, Jesus saved us from this wrath which is to come, from this tribulation which is to come. And, I'm going to show you that the Tribulation is called "the wrath." Turn to Revelation chapter 1 and...excuse me, Revelation chapter 6 and verse 17. I want you to see how the Great Tribulation is described—Revelation chapter 6, verse 17. Well, let's go to verse 15: *"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty [man]"—"men"—"and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and...the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne"*—now, notice this—*"and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who [is] able to stand?"* (Revelation 6:15–17) The Tribulation Period is the great day of His wrath.

Now, go back to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 10. The Bible says that the Church is *"to wait for [God's] Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, [who] delivered us from the wrath to come."* (1 Thessalonians 1:10) The Tribulation is the great day of His wrath, but Christians are delivered from that day.

Now, you're in 1 Thessalonians; just turn right to chapter 5—1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 1 through 4. Paul is still talking about the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he said, *"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need*

that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety—that is, when the people of this world are saying, “We’ve got it made”—*“then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape”*—Jeremiah has already talked about men who are like a woman in travail. But now, notice what he says to the brethren in the Church—*“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:1–4) It’s going to overtake them, but it’s not going to overtake us. Skip down to verse 9—1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 9: *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath”*—*“God [has] not appointed us to wrath”*—*“but to obtain salvation”*—that means deliverance—*“by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep”*—that is, whether we’re living or dead—*“we should live together with him.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:9) Now, notice again what Paul says in verse 11: *“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:11) Now friend, if we were waiting for the Great Tribulation, it would not be a comfort; it would be something that we would be very apprehensive of. But, Paul says that Jesus died for us to deliver us from that wrath which is to come.

Now, I want you to turn to Revelation chapter 3 for just a moment, and I want you to look in verse 7. The promise to the church at Philadelphia at Revelation chapter 3 and verse 7: *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”* (Revelation 3:7) Then, verse 10: *“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I [will] also...keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”* (Revelation 3:10) God says, “I am going to keep you, dear Church, out of that terrible hour because you have loved me and served me.”

Someone may say, “Well, that’s just what He said to the church at Philadelphia.” Well, turn to verse 13: *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”* (Revelation 3:13) It’s not just what He said to the church at Philadelphia; it’s what He’s saying to all churches who keep His Word, to all churches who love Him, to all people who love His appearing. *“I...will keep [you] from [that] hour of temptation [that’s going to try the entire] world.”* (Revelation 3:10)

Now, I want you to turn to the Gospel of Luke chapter 21, if you will, for a moment, and I want you to read in verse 36: *“Watch...therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”* (Luke 21:36) Now, the Bible just seems to make it clear and plain to me in these passages and so many passages that we as Christians are those who are going to escape this great tribulation that’s coming upon the earth. It doesn’t mean that we’ll not have tribulation. Jesus said, *“In [this] world ye shall have tribulation.”*

(John 16:33) But, we're talking about a time that God is going to pour out His wrath upon the inhabitants of the world. To think that God would pour out His wrath upon His own body, the Church, is unthinkable. And, as you study the Bible, you're going to find out that before God sent judgment, even in the Old Testament, He took His saints out. He delivered Lot from Sodom before He rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom. He put Noah in the ark before the flood came there upon the world of the ungodly.

But, here's the great problem that I have with my brethren who think that the Church is going to go through the Great Tribulation. There are certain events that are clearly prophesied about the Great Tribulation. There are certain things that we know when we're in the Great Tribulation. It would be hard for me to believe that we could be in it and not know it, especially in the middle of the Great Tribulation—after three-and-a-half years. The antichrist is going to enter into the rebuilt temple and declare himself as God. And, Jesus very clearly warned about that and called that *"the abomination of desolation."* (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14) Now, if I were in the Tribulation, and this great world leader that arose out of the unified nations of Europe were to go to Jerusalem and go into the rebuild temple, enter into the Holy of Holies, and there declare himself God, do you know what I could do? I could just start counting—forty-two months, twelve hundred and sixty days; a time, and times, and half a time. And, I could say I'll tell you exactly when Jesus is coming if I believe that the Church is going through the Tribulation. I could just say, "Just get ready. Three and a half years, He'll be here." But, what does the Bible teach to the Church about the Second Coming of Jesus? What? He may come at any moment. The Bible teaches that you cannot know, that *"in such an hour as ye think not,"* (Matthew 24:44) that Jesus is coming *"as a thief in the night."* (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10)

Turn, for example, to Matthew 24 for just a moment. Look, if you will, in verse 38: *"For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that [Noah] entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away"*—who didn't know? Even Noah didn't know. God just said, "Noah, go into the ark." (Genesis 7:1) God told Noah to "come into the ark." And, God didn't tell Noah when it was going to start to rain. He just said, "Noah, get ready." And, He—*"knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; [even] so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."* (Matthew 24:38–39) Look, if you will, in verse 38...excuse me, in Matthew 24, verse 42: *"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."* (Matthew 24:42) Look, if you will, in verse 44: *"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."* (Matthew 24:44)

Turn, if you will, to Mark 13 for just a moment and get something of the same thought—Mark 13, verse 32: Jesus said, *"But of that day and that hour knoweth no*

man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take heed—“*take ye heed*”—“*[and] watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is*”—and then, Jesus said—“*For the Son of Man is [like] a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.*” (Mark 13:32–36)

Now friend, any doctrine that takes away the idea of the eminency of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, in my estimation, is a false doctrine. And, if the Church must go through the Tribulation, anybody who would know the Scriptures and any Christian who would be a church member and knew the Lord going through that tribulation would be able to pinpoint the exact time of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, there is this eminency. Besides, the purpose of the Great Tribulation is to prepare the Jews and to punish the Gentiles. We don’t read anything about the Church being in the Tribulation. It’s “*the...day of his wrath.*” (Revelation 6:17) God has “*delivered us from...wrath.*” (1 Thessalonians 1:10) God has promised that He will keep us from that hour of temptation which is to try the whole world. (Revelation 3:10)

Now listen, friend, if I believed that the Church were going through the Great Tribulation, you know what I would do? I’d stop looking up, and I’d start looking around. Know what I mean? I’d start watching for certain events to happen so I could tick it off on my calendar. But, we’re not told to look around; we’re told to watch. We’re told to look up and wait for our Lord. And, I want to tell you, there’s a power to the truth that Jesus may come at any moment, and I believe that the devil would like to remove that truth from our church, just that he might remove the power of that truth.

a. A Comforting Thought

Number one: There is the comforting power. Now, remember our scripture that we started with—when Paul said, “*Wherefore comfort one another with these words*”? (1 Thessalonians 4:18) What was the comfort? That Jesus was coming, and “*the dead in Christ [would] rise first: [And] we which...remain [and are alive will] be caught up...to meet [them] in the air.*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17) If I knew that the Great Tribulation were coming, then, dear friend, the Second Coming of Jesus—if I knew that the Great Tribulation were coming first—the Second Coming of Jesus would not be a blessed hope for me. The grave would be the blessed hope. I would say, “Even so, come, undertaker. Even so, welcome, grave,” because those living saints would not be comforting one another. They would not be anticipating, waiting, longing, looking, learning of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, can you imagine anybody saying, “Even so, come, tribulation?” No, but I can imagine someone saying, “*Even so,*

come, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20)

b. A Purifying Power

But, not only is there a comforting thought; there is a purifying power. The Bible says in 1 John 3, verse 3: “[he] *that hath this hope in him—the imminent return of our Lord—“purifieth himself.”* (1 John 3:3)

Conclusion

You see, we don’t know when He’s coming, so we always want to be ready. Isn’t that right?

The Day of the Lord

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 5, 1990

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 5

“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:2

Outline

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Introduction

Take God's Word and turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, which is one of the great, great passages on the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are exciting days in which we live. What a glorious time to be living, because we are living between two mountain peaks. We are living between that mountain peak of His crucifixion and the mountain peak of His coronation. The Lord Jesus. Those of us who know God's Word, those of us who have His Holy Spirit vibrating within our bosoms, have a feeling and, indeed, a longing that Jesus Christ, that His coming is very, very near.

As I prayed and got ready to preach this morning, it seemed as if God were saying to me, “Adrian, get God's people ready for what is about to happen.” That we might say it, sing it, and mean it:

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
O may I then in Him be found,
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

—EDWARD MOTE

I hope you are dressed up and ready to go.

Now look in God's Word here. I'm going to read 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 1–11: *"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do"* (1 Thessalonians 5:1–11).

Now the Apostle Paul here speaks of the day, and he calls that day *the Day of the Lord*. I want us to think about that day, and I want us to think about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the day the Bible calls *the Day of the Lord*. And there are several things I want you to organize your thoughts around.

I. A Surprising Day

First of all, I want you to think of that day as a surprising day—a surprising day. Now notice what the Apostle Paul says about that day, the Day of the Lord. He says, in verse 2, that you know perfectly that the day of the Lord cometh, as a what? "As a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

One time, Joyce and I came home, and we realized that we had an unexpected visitor. He had come and gone. And with him, some of our things had come and gone. It was in another state. But you know one thing that fellow did? He never wrote us a note and said, "I'm coming on such-and-such a day." Be ready. He didn't do that. I mean, he came and he went. And some of our things went with him.

Now when Jesus comes, He is going to take something with Him. Guess what He's taking with Him. Who? Us. He's coming as a thief in the night, and this unsaved world is going to say, "Look, He came and He left, and we were so surprised; we were not expecting Him." My dear friends, the rapture of the Church is going to usher in a period of time known as *the day of the Lord*. "Well," you say, "the Day of the Lord—that sounds rosy and cozy; what a wonderful day it will be!" Well, let me tell you several things about that day.

A. He Is Coming Solemnly

First of all, when Jesus comes, and the day of the Lord comes, it is going to be such a solemn day. Look at it again. It is called here *the Day of the Lord*. Do you see that? *The Day of the Lord*. When Jesus Christ was being crucified, there were some women with Him. And they were crying. He was carrying His cross. And they were just convulsing and pouring out tears. And Jesus, on His way to Calvary, stopped and looked at those women. And this is what He said to them: “*Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves*” (Luke 23:28). Jesus said then, “This is your day” (Luke 19:42). That is, man is having his heyday now. The devil is having a holiday. This is your day. And then, He said this, “*My time is not yet come*” (John 7:6). Man has his day, and then, God will have His day.

Now when Jesus said, “My day has not yet come,” He was talking about the same thing that the Scripture was talking about here, when it calls this day *the Day of the Lord*. Three things I would remind you about the day of the Lord. Number one, it’s a very solemn day. This world is in for a lot of trouble. I’m not here to give you a happiness report. I want to give you some scriptures, and I want you to jot them down, and listen to them. Do not turn to them. You jot them down, and I will share them with you, and you’ll have them in your notes. Let me tell you how God describes the day of the Lord. And that day has not yet come. But it’s right here; it’s right around the corner.

Joel 2, verses 1–3: “*Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them*” (Joel 2:1–3). God says, “This day—there has never been anything like it.”

You take all of the holocausts, all of the wars, all of the famines, all of the pestilence, and all of the fears, and God says, “There has never been anything like the day that is going to come.” Then, in Jeremiah 30, verse 7, Jeremiah the prophet said the same thing that Joel the prophet said. He said, “*Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble...*”—that is, Jacob is the name for fleshly Jews—“*the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it*” (Jeremiah 30:7). Out of the Great Tribulation a great number of Jews are going to come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. And then, the prophet Daniel said, in Daniel 12, verse 1, “*And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time*” (Daniel 12:1). A time of trouble.

The Day of the Lord—what a solemn day it is going to be! Jesus Christ Himself told

of that day, in Matthew 24:21. Jesus said, *“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be”* (Matthew 24:21). Notice what all of these prophets are saying. There has never been anything like this. You don’t have any historical precedents for the day that is coming. The Bible calls it *the Day of the Lord*.

The Apostle John, exiled on the Isle of Patmos, wrote the Apocalypse, the Book of the Revelation. And God pulled back the veil, and God showed John the Great Tribulation that is coming. God showed the Apostle John the Day of the Lord—the time of trouble. And this is what the Apostle John wrote as he looked forward into the future and saw that day come—he said, in Revelation 6, verses 15 and 16, *“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb”* (Revelation 6:15–16).

Can you imagine a phrase more pregnant with meaning than this one—*“the wrath of the Lamb”*? We think of the gentleness of our Savior. Oh, my dear friend, there is the severity of the Savior—*“the wrath of the Lamb.”* And then, he says, in Revelation 6, verse 17, *“For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:17). Men mimic Him. They laugh at Him. They ridicule Him. They put the crucifix in a pail of urine, and call it art; and we fund it with our tax dollars. Jesus just says, *“This is your day—this is your day. My day has not yet come. The wrath is coming.”*

B. **He Is Coming Suddenly**

It’s a solemn day, my dear friends. But not only is He coming solemnly—He’s coming suddenly. Like a thief in the night. Perhaps this afternoon. Perhaps before I finish this lesson. Jesus Christ said, *“For in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh”* (Matthew 24:44).

C. **He Is Coming Surely**

Solemnly, suddenly, and surely. Look in 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 3: *“For when they shall say, Peace and safety...”*—that is, everything is all right, it’s a wonderful afternoon—*“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them”* (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

He is coming suddenly, and He is coming surely. Look, if you will, in verse 3, the last part: *“as travail upon a woman with child”* (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

I saw a woman. She was very heavy with child. And someone said concerning her, “She’s expecting.” I said, “She’s not expecting—it’s a sure thing.” It’s just so certain.

Now what God is saying here—“*as travail upon a woman with child*”—now, what He is saying again, is that this world is pregnant with judgment. There is no escape—no escape. And so the very first thing I want you to see is what I call a surprising day—a surprising day. It’s going to surprise this world—this unexpected world.

II. The Surrounding Darkness

But I want you to see, secondly, not only the surprising day, but the surrounding darkness. Begin now in verse 4: “*But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night*” (1 Thessalonians 5:4–7).

There is coming a surprising day, but we are living in surrounding darkness. You see, we are living in a day of moral darkness. We are living in a day of spiritual darkness. We are living in a day of political darkness. Social darkness. The world is asleep. The world has been chloroformed by the devil, and those who are not asleep have anesthetized themselves. They are drunk. Look in verse 7: “*They that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night*” (1 Thessalonians 5:7). Some have been chloroformed by the spirit of this age, and others are in a drunken stupor.

A. We Should Wise Up

So what about those of us who are saved? What are we to be like in this darkness? Well, in the very first place, the Bible says here that we are to wise up. Look in verse 4: “*But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief*” (1 Thessalonians 5:4). A Christian is the only one who can make sense of these chaotic times. I mean, we are the only ones who don’t have to go around with *headline hysteria*.

You pick up the newspaper and see what is happening in the Middle East. What does that do to you? It just brings my mind back to the Word of God. And I say that everything is on schedule. Everything is happening exactly as the Bible says that it is going to happen. Christians know the mystery of history because we know the Word of God. How are we going to get ourselves out of the delirium that we are in? Do you think the Pentagon has the answer? Do you think Congress has the answer? Do you think that the United Nations has the answer? Of course not.

You say, “Well, we will think our way out. Science is the answer.” Did you know that 75% of all the scientists that have ever lived in the history of the world are alive today? Did you know that 75% of the medicine that we use today has been developed since World War II? Oh boy, we are so smart, and we have never been in deeper trouble! I

agree with Dr. Vance Havner. He said that, “Scientifically, we are in the graduate school, but morally we are in kindergarten.” Science is not the answer.

You say, “Well, military might and politics is the answer.” Do you really think so? Do you think we are going to go steaming into the Persian Gulf, and, with a few bombs and a few bullets, we are going to solve things? Dear friend, listen. Even when we win the war, we lose the peace. Now we are not even able to win the war.

Maybe you think social reform is the answer—we just need more education. Friend, do you think that all of those people who are causing the trouble are not educated? We are fighting clever devils. I want to remind you that there was no country at that time that had a higher educational standard than Nazi Germany when World War II began. Education is not the answer. We had better wise up. Look at what he says here. He says, “But brethren,”—verse 4—“you are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief.”

B. We Should Wake Up

Not only should we wise up, we need to wake up. Look in verse 6: “*Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others*” (1 Thessalonians 5:6). My dear friends, what is God going to have to say to the church? God’s alarm clock is going off. And God is saying, “Wise up and wake up.” We trudge to church, Sunday after Sunday. We yawn in the face of God. We say, “I’ve heard that before about the Second Coming of Jesus.”

I remind you, my dear friend, that He is coming as a thief in the night. The maps of the world are changing. Overnight, nations are being moved around on the checkerboard of time. And the stage is being rapidly set for the final act on the drama of the ages. Jesus Christ is about to appear. But the problem with so many Christians is that they are like Samson—they have gone to sleep in the lap of Delilah. And then, they go to church, Sunday after Sunday, and they shake themselves, and they don’t know that the Spirit of the Lord has departed from them.

C. We Should Dress Up

We should wise up, we should wake up, and we should dress up. Look, if you will, in verse 8, and see what he says: “*But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation*” (1 Thessalonians 5:8).

There are two things that you had better protect in these last days. One is your heart, and the other is your head. Are you listening? Dear friends, in these days, these end times in which we live, you had better keep on the breastplate, and protect your heart; you had better keep on the helmet, and protect your head. That’s what he is saying. Dress up. Get your heart right, and keep it right.

And what is the breastplate? The breastplate of faith and love. Your faith should be

in the unmistakable and unshakable promises of God. And in these days, your love should abound more and more, for Christ, for His church, for His Word, and for the lost. Keep your heart right—dress up.

Put on the breastplate of faith, and then, put on the helmet of hope. I love that. Look at it again. The helmet of hope—*“the hope of salvation.”* Now here, when he says *“the hope of salvation,”* he doesn’t use the word *hope* as “maybe,” as “perhaps,” as “something that might happen.” *Hope*, in the Bible, means, “a divine certainty; something that we can hardly wait for to happen.” That’s what he’s talking about—the certainty of salvation, authenticated by the Word of God.

Now friend, I want to tell you that there are a lot of things that I do not know. I do not know what is ahead. But I know who is ahead. His name is Jesus, friend. He was born on time, He died on time, He rose on time, and He’s coming on time. You can be certain of it. He may seem slow, but He’s never late.

You get your heart right, and put on the breastplate. You get your head right, put on the helmet, and be ready for Jesus to come. What’s he saying? He’s saying that, in this day of surrounding darkness, you be aware, awake. Wise up. Wake up. Dress up. And be ready for Jesus Christ to come.

III. The Sudden Departure

There’s a third thing that I want you to see, today. Not only do I want you to see a surprising day, and not only do I want you to see the surrounding darkness; I want you to see the sudden departure—the sudden departure. Suddenly, thousands and millions of people are going to leave Planet Earth. They are going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. You say, “That smacks of supernaturalism.” You’d better believe it does. That’s exactly what I’m trying to say.

Look, if you will now, in verses 9 and 10. He says here, “Put on for a helmet the hope of salvation,” and the word *salvation* means, “deliverance.” For, notice in verse 9: *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath,”*—that is, *wrath* means, “the judgment of God”—*“but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep,”*—that is, whether we are alive or dead—*“we should live together with Him”* (1 Thessalonians 5:9–10). There is coming a sudden departure. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes as a thief in the night, He is coming to take His Church out, and bring judgment upon this world.

Now I believe that the rapture of the Church is at hand. And I do not believe, as some believe, that the Church is going to go through the Great Tribulation. There are those who do believe that; but, I want to show you, from the passage before us, and surrounding passages, that we could be in Heaven in the next 15 seconds. We are not waiting for a tribulation period. There’s nothing that we are waiting for, in Bible

prophecy, before we are taken out and caught up to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air.

First of all, the church is taken out, and then, the Day of the Lord comes. The Church is taken out, then, the Great Tribulation comes. Now you see, that's true for three reasons.

First of all, the Great Tribulation is called the day of God's wrath, and God does not pour out His wrath upon His children. Look, if you will, at verse 9: *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Do you see that? God has not appointed us to wrath. Go back to chapter 1 of this same book—1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 10. The Bible says we are *"to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come"* (1 Thessalonians 1:10). He delivered us. When He died on the cross, He delivered us from the wrath to come.

Remember that passage that I read from Revelation chapter 6, when those people went in to the dens and mountains, and prayed that the mountains would fall on them, and hide them from the face of Him that sat upon the throne? And then, it says, *"For the great day of his wrath is come"* (Revelation 6:15–17). That's what is going to happen to the unsaved people. They are going into that day of His wrath. But the Bible says that God has delivered us from the wrath that is to come.

Now God's children are the objects of His chastenment, but never the objects of His wrath. God never pours out His wrath upon His children. Let me give you an example—Noah, for an example. When God brought the flood upon the world in Noah's day, which was judgment, what did God do with Noah first? He put Noah in the ark. And then, He sends the flood. When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone, what did God do with Lot before he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah? Remember, Lot was a righteous man. The angel said to Lot, "Get out of this city because I can do nothing until you get out of this city, until you come hither" (Genesis 19:22). That is, "I can't destroy this city with fire and brimstone, until, first of all, Lot, you are out of this city."

God is going to call His nationals home, and then, He's going to prepare for war. My dear friends, that is the way it works. First of all, the Bible says that God has not appointed us to wrath. I do not expect the church to go through the Great Tribulation. Secondly, if we are looking for Jesus Christ to come at any moment, if the church is going through the Great Tribulation, rather than looking for Christ, we would be looking for Antichrist.

Do you understand what I am saying? Do you understand that, if we are looking for some Great Tribulation to come, we would say, "Well, Jesus can't come until the Great Tribulation is over." But look, if you will, at verse 10. The Bible says that He *"died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him"* (1 Thessalonians

5:10). That is, we are expecting Jesus Christ at any moment.

Now you are in 1 Thessalonians 5—go back to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, and look at verse 16. Paul speaks of the time when Jesus Christ is going to come. Well, let's begin in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verses 16 to 18; and, he says, *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–18). Now notice what the Apostle Paul did. He talked about Jesus coming—being caught up to meet Him in the air—and He included Himself in that group. He said, "and we which remain and are alive."

The Apostle Paul expected the rapture in His lifetime. You say, "Well, was He wrong?" No, He was right—right to expect it. Jesus never did say when He was coming, but He said to be always ready. And here's the Apostle Paul, 2,000 years ago, saying that it could be today. "We who remain and are alive shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." Dear friend, there is one thing that is true, and it is this: that we should expect Jesus Christ at any moment—at any moment. Suddenly, like a thief in the night, like a bolt out of the blue, like a bolt of lightning. He says, *"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be"* (Matthew 24:27). And so dear friend, we are not waiting for certain prophetic things to be fulfilled before Jesus will come.

One of the great expositors of yesteryear was a man named G. Campbell Morgan. Listen to what G. Campbell Morgan said. And I copied this down—it was so good. He said, "To me the Second Coming is the perpetual light on the path which makes the present bearable. I never lay my head on my pillow without thinking that maybe before the morning breaks, the final morning may have dawned." Don't you like that? "I never begin my work without thinking that perhaps He may interrupt my work and begin His own. This is now His word to all believing souls, till He comes." We are not looking for death—we are looking for Him.

What did He mean? At any moment, I put my head upon my pillow, and I may awaken at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. You see, dear friends, Christians are not told to look for the day of His wrath, we are told to look for the rapture, when we are taken out at any moment. Notice in verse 11: *"Wherefore comfort yourselves together"* (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Now if I knew that the Great Tribulation had to come before the Second Coming of Jesus, then the Second Coming of Jesus is not a comfort to me; I say, in order to get there, I've got to go through the Great Tribulation. But my dear friend, when I know that, at any moment, Jesus may come, what a great comfort that is! If I'm going through the Great Tribulation, I can't say, *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"* (Revelation 22:20). I say,

“Even so, come tribulation!” I’d rather say, “Even so, come coffin! Even so, come death!”

What I’m trying to say, dear friend, is that those of us who are saved, those of us who know the Lord Jesus, those of us who are born again, can expect, at any moment, up and away—at any moment. You say, “Isn’t that farfetched.” I want to ask you a question. How did Elijah go to Heaven in the Old Testament? Bodily, he was taken up into Heaven. I ask you another question. How did Jesus Christ go to Heaven? While they beheld, He was taken up into Heaven (Acts 1:11). One of these days, soon and very soon, we are going to see the King.

Conclusion

I pray God that you will not be left behind for this day—this day when Hell will have a holiday, when God’s wrath is poured out upon this world, when the pit is opened, and the moaning screaming demons are vomited forth upon this earth. The Bible says, “*And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them*” (Revelation 9:6). What people call death will be a welcome relief from that day, which is the day of His wrath. Are you ready? Are you saved? Do you know, beyond a shadow of any doubt, that, if Jesus were to come today, you would be caught up to meet the Lord in the air?

Some years ago, I read about a tourist down in Italy. And he came across an old castle. And he walked in there, and he found a gardener on his knees, just pruning the shrubbery. And he asked the gardener, “Is there anybody here?” And he replied, “No. The castle is owned by an absentee landowner.” He said, “May I come in and look around?” And the gardener said, “Yes, come on in.” The tourist said, “How long has it been since the owner has been here?” He said, “12 years.” The tourist said, “12 years?” The gardener said, “That’s right.” He said, “Well, who tells you what to do?” He replied, “Well, he has an agent in Milan who tells me what to do.” The tourist said, “Well, I don’t understand it. He hasn’t been here in 12 years, and yet, these grounds are beautiful. You are keeping the garden as if you are expecting him next week.” He said, “No—today, sir. Today, I’m expecting him.”

Oh, that’s the way we are to be living. That’s the way we are to be living, dear friend—as if He were coming today. *Every child of God ought to be living as if Jesus were crucified yesterday, raised this morning, and coming back this afternoon.* Are you ready for Jesus to come?

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
O may I then in Him be found!
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

—EDWARD MOTE

Heads are bowed and eyes are closed.

Where Has Everybody Gone?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 1, 1985

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 5

“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:3

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Introduction

Let's look in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, and begin in verse 1. We're going to be talking about something that's called "the day of the Lord." It is a dark day, a terrible day, a gloomy day, a day of judgment. The Bible calls it the Great Tribulation (Revelation 7:14). And it will transpire and take place after the Lord Jesus comes and takes His Church. Paul speaks of it, beginning in verse 1: *“But of the times and the seasons,*

brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:1–4).

Now this message, like all of these messages, is meant not only to inform you, and instruct you, and enlighten you, but to motivate you, and to get you ready for His return.

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh may I then in Him be found.
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

—EDWARD MOTE

And if you’re not absolutely ready for the second coming of Jesus Christ, I bid you pay attention.

I. A Sudden Destruction

Now there are three basic things in the Scripture that I see. And incidentally, we’re going to go ultimately right on down to verse 11. But the three basic things that I see in the Scripture—the very first is the phrase “sudden destruction” that just jumps up out at me. Look at it again in the first three verses. *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction.”* So point number one I’m going to entitle “sudden destruction.”

A. The Day of the Lord Is a Solemn Day

Now this day of the Lord is a day of sudden destruction. What kind of a day is that? What does the Bible mean when it uses the terminology *day of the Lord*. It is not talking about a 24-hour period. The word *day* is used in a broader sense. It means, “a specified period of time,” when God is going to judge this world. The Bible calls that day of the Lord by many terms. Jesus called it the Great Tribulation. Listen to what Joel says in Joel chapter 2, verse 1: *“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness”* (Joel 2:1–2). Joel said, “Tremble, when you think of the day of the Lord.” Jeremiah said, in Jeremiah chapter 30 and verse 7: *“Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it”* (Jeremiah 30:7). What a time that must be! As Jeremiah said, there is nothing that can be compared with it.

Daniel said—the great prophet Daniel—in Daniel chapter 12 and verse 1: “*And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time*” (Daniel 12:1). “A time of trouble” he says, “like no nation has ever known.” And the Lord Jesus Christ, when Jesus was giving that lesson on prophecy in Matthew chapter 24 and verse 21, said, “*For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be*” (Matthew 24:21). Jesus is saying, there’s absolutely nothing to be compared to it. I want to tell you, folks, the second coming of Jesus is going to be just that quick as that noise you just heard. All right? He’s coming in a moment just like that, and it’s going to be a time.

Jesus said there’s not going to be any time, no time to be compared with this time. In the Book of the Revelation, we hear of men, in Revelation chapter 6, who are literally praying for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them, and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. For they say, in Revelation chapter 6 and verse 17: “*For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*” (Revelation 6:17).

Now think about it. Think what Joel said. Joel said, “Tremble—a day of darkness and of gloominess.” Jeremiah said, “There’s nothing to be compared with it.” Daniel said, “It’s a time of trouble—there’s never been a time like this since there was a nation.” Jesus said, “Great tribulation—never has there been a time like this; never will there be a time like this.” And in the Book of the Revelation, men in that time are praying for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them, they’re going underground because “the great day of His wrath is come.”

B. The Day of the Lord Will Be a Surprising Day

So the first thing I want to say about the day of the Lord is—my friend, listen to me—it is a solemn day. Second thing I want to say about it: not only is it a solemn day, but, my dear friend, it will be a surprising day. For verse 2 says that He’s coming “*as a thief in the night*” (1 Thessalonians 5:2). Verse 3 says that this day is coming as a thief in the night—the day itself will be like a thief in the night, not the Lord, but the day. The day is coming as a thief in the night. They’re going to be saying, “*Peace and safety*,” verse 3 says. And when they’re saying, “*Peace and safety; then sudden destruction*” will come upon them (1 Thessalonians 5:3). They’re going to be surprised. They’re going to say, “We have it made; alas, we’re secure.” And just when they say that, that’s when the surprise comes.

Now you never know when the thief is coming. A thief in the night never writes you a letter, and says, “My dear neighbor, on next Thursday at 2 a.m. in the morning, I’m going to visit your home and carry away your jewels, and your silver, and your television, and whatever else.” You can’t say that, no. He comes in secret; it’s always a surprise. Now this day is going to be not only a solemn day, it’s going to be a surprising

day. The inhabitants of the world will be surprised by it. Know why?

You see, it is almost a conflict here. If, dear friend, the Bible says there are going to be *"wars and rumours of war"* right down to the end of time (Matthew 24:6). And we're not saying, *"Peace and safety"* today, are we? We wouldn't expect *the day of the Lord* to come today because people are not saying, *"Peace and safety."* People are saying, "What are we going to do?" Think of what's happening in South Africa right now. Think of what is happening in the Middle East right now. Think of the famine in Africa right now. Think of the turmoil in this nation, and almost every nation. Think of the terrorism in Europe right now. No, no, people are not saying, *"Peace and safety"* right now. So what time is this when people are going to be saying, *"Peace and safety,"* and then sudden destruction will come? It will be the time right after the rapture of the church.

Now you say, "Oh, when all of God's people are taken out, everybody will be in consternation." Not for very long, because the antichrist will come. And the Bible says, *"Him, whose coming...with all deceivableness of unrighteousness"* (2 Thessalonians 2:9–10). He will tell a lie, which will be the biggest lie ever told. He will tell the world what happened to us.

Do you know what he will say? Here's what I believe he'll say: he'll say, "They were taken out of the way, it was God's judgment on them. Those fundamentalists were standing in the way of world peace and God judged them. God took them out of the way." I think that's the lie he'll tell. I don't know what lie we're going to see, in 2 Thessalonians, the 2nd chapter. He is such a liar that he is called the *"lie"* (2 Thessalonians 2:11). And he will come with some fantastic explanation of what happened to us. And then, he'll say—now that we're gone, the Church—"We can finally have world peace." And he will be the devil's messiah. And the world will rush into the arms of the devil's messiah, and he will come with a one-world government, a one-world church, a one-world economic system, and everybody will say, "Hallelujah! Peace at last!" And the nation Israel will receive him as their messiah.

Jesus said, *"I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive"* (John 5:43). That's what Jesus said. And Israel will make peace with this false messiah, and he'll sign a peace treaty with Israel. And the world will seem to be at peace; and, when they're saying, *"Peace and safety,"* then, sudden destruction.

When you go home, you read Daniel chapter 8. And in Daniel chapter 8, is a description of this coming Satan superman, this messiah that we're going to talk about in 2 Thessalonians, the 2nd chapter. And one of the most insightful statements in all of Daniel chapter 8 is this one, as it describes the antichrist; and it says this: *"And by peace shall destroy many"* (Daniel 8:25). Not by war, but by peace. By peace, he will destroy many. This war-torn world will be so hungry for peace they will gladly yield their

alliance, and their subservience, and their strength, to any man who seems to be able to have a hope of peace. And at first, there will be time of pseudo-peace. And they will be saying, *“Peace and safety,”* then, sudden destruction.

C. **The Day of the Lord Is a Sure Day**

This day, my dear friend, is a solemn day. This day, my precious friend, is a surprising day. But then, thirdly, it is a sure day. Because, look again, in verse 3. Not only is He coming as a thief in the night, but, not only is the day coming as a thief in the night, but the day is coming also as travail upon a woman who is in birth pains. Look at it—see what God says here: *“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape”* (1 Thessalonians 5:3). It is solemn; it is surprising; but, it is sure, like a travail upon a woman. It’s like birth pains. Now dear friend, it’s talking about the pains of delivering a child.

You see, when a woman is pregnant, there’s going to be a birth. Even if that birth is aborted, there is something that must come forth. You see, there’s no such thing as being a little bit pregnant. One man said, “Is your wife expecting?” The other man said, “Expecting nothing—it is a sure thing.” Let me tell you something, folks—What is God talking about here? When you feel humanity writhing in pain, it’s like a woman in travail. There is going to come a birth of a gloomy, terrible, horrible day like a woman in travail—it is sure, it is certain. When he speaks of the thief in the night, that speaks of the surprise of it. When he speaks of a woman in travail, that speaks of the sureness of it.

What Paul is saying is this: that our world is pregnant with judgment. That’s what he’s saying. And he’s saying that there are going to be birth pains, but the day that is delivered will be a day of darkness and gloominess. And this is what I want to call “sudden destruction.” This world is on a collision course with disaster. And well, we’d better learn it. The day of the Lord will come, the Bible says.

II. **The Surrounding Darkness**

Now the second thing I want you to notice. Not only the sudden destruction, but second, the surrounding darkness. Look, if you will now, beginning in verse 4, and let’s read through verse 7: *“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night”* (1 Thessalonians 5:4–7).

A. Moral Darkness

Now Paul is talking to those people in that particular time, and he is telling them that the darkness has already set in, and there is moral darkness. My dear friend, what moral darkness do we have today? You think of the debauchery, and the sin, and the filth, in movies, and Hollywood, and television, and the newspapers, and the novels—it's unbelievable that we have become almost chloroformed by the spirit of our age. We do not realize the depth of depravity.

I was reading the other day some of the things that are in the lyrics of the rock music now that the children are listening to. I mean, absolute, pure, unadulterated obscenities that your little kids may be be-bopping to, as far as you know—the filth.

B. Spiritual Darkness

It's a time of moral darkness; it's a time of spiritual darkness. Eastern religions and cults have invaded our land.

C. Political Darkness

It is a time, my dear friend, of political darkness. Our politicians don't know which way to turn.

D. Social Darkness

It is a time of social darkness, and calamities, and famines, and problems. And diseases are becoming epidemic, and pandemic, and there are troubles on every hand.

E. Three Things that Should Characterize the Christian

It is a day of darkness. But my friend, God has a plan for his people in this day of darkness, and Paul tells us three things that should characterize the Christian in this surrounding darkness.

1. The Christian Should be Aware

Number one, the Christian should be aware. Look in verse 4: *"But ye brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief"* (1 Thessalonians 5:4). No Christian should be surprised at what happens. No Christian needs to go around with *headline hysteria*. We are not in darkness, that that day should overtake us as a thief.

My dear friend, you can take the Bible—the Word of God, and today's newspapers, and put them side by side, and you can say, "I know what's going on." The Christian is the only one who can make sense out of the situation that we're in. He's the only one. We're not in darkness, that that day should overtake us as a thief. We're not looking to other areas for relief or release. We're not looking somewhere else for some *pan-Asia* to deliver us. We're looking to Jesus Christ.

a. Science Is Not the Answer

My dear friend, science will never deliver us. Science is not the answer. I was reading recently, 75% of all of the scientists who have ever lived are living right now. They're alive right now. They're alive right now. And they've given us so many gadgets, and so many miracles, and so many wonders; but, for the first time, man is afraid of what he knows. And we have brought ourselves right to the brink of destruction by our so-called vaunted knowledge, as we worship at the site of our computers. And we're about to produce a race of monsters by genetic engineering.

I read recently that 75% of all of the medicines that we take have been developed since World War II. You know the wonder drugs? You take them, and then wonder what's going to happen to you.

Listen. It is the day of technological advance, but science is not the answer. Science has made the world a neighborhood, but not a brotherhood, and we're living under the shadow of that mushroom cloud. And we're afraid of what we're doing to the atmosphere, and the air, and the land. If we're so smart, why are we in such trouble?

b. The Military Is Not the Answer

Friend, I want to tell you also that the military is not the answer. We're great at winning the war, then losing the peace. Now we cannot even win the war. We get in scimmages that we are ashamed to lose and afraid to win. We don't know what to do.

c. Sociology Is Not the Answer

Sociology is not the answer. The sociologists think, if you can just spray enough money over a program, it will go away. They're saying, "Give us enough money now to investigate how to cure AIDS." Where's the person whose going to say how to stop it—how to stop it?

No, we're not interested in that. We want some way to live our lifestyle; we want some way to drink our booze; we want some way to live in immorality; we want some way to take our drugs—and still escape the consequences. The sociologist is dumbfounded. He doesn't know how to deal with the problem. I'm telling you, my dear friend, that we who are Christians should be aware that the only hope of this poor sin-cursed, rocking and reeling, world is the second coming of Jesus Christ. You say, "What a pessimist you are!" Friend, I'm not a pessimist—I'm a glowing optimist, because Jesus is coming. He is coming; and that's not pessimistic—that is a blessed hope.

2. The Christian Should Be Awake

The Christian should be aware. "You are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:4). But not only should the Christian be aware, the Christian also ought to be awake. Notice in verses 5 and 6: *"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober"* (1 Thessalonians 5:5–6).

Now if we're aware, then we ought to be awake. I mean, we need to be living, and keeping with the urgency and the emergency of these times. *So many sermons are like lullabies to put people to sleep. I want my sermon to be like a reveille to wake you up.* I believe that God's alarm clock is going off all around us, and God is saying, "It is time to wake up, get up, dress up, and go out, and stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ." We cannot sleep.

So many people come to church on Sunday morning and feel that they have done God a favor. You can almost read the sign that's hanging around their neck: "Please do not disturb." The one deacon thought he would impress his pastor. He said, "Pastor, would you give me a little prayer to pray upon entering the sanctuary?" The pastor knew his habits. He said, "May I suggest, 'Now I lay me down to sleep'?" That's how so many of us are.

Now the Apostle Paul said, "We are to wake up." *"Now is our salvation nearer than we believed"* (Romans 13:11). It is high time to waken out of our sleep. We are to be awake. We are to be alert.

I heard Dr. Charlie Howard one time—one of the greatest preachers I've ever heard preach—years ago, said something that stuck in my mind. I've never been able to forget it. He said, "I had rather be Peter, James, and John asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane than to be a Christian asleep in these pregnant times in which we live." "I'd rather be Peter, James, and John asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane than to be a modern-day Christian asleep in these pregnant times in which we live." Like a woman in travail, dear friend, it is going to come forth.

3. The Christian Should Be Awaiting

Now let me tell you something. Not only should the Christian be aware, and not only should the Christian be awake, but the Christian ought to be awaiting—he ought to be looking for Jesus to come. For look, if you will now, in verse 8: *"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation"* (1 Thessalonians 5:8).

Now "the hope of salvation" means the expectation of salvation, or deliverance. You see, we're to wake up, and then, we're to dress up—and we're to dress up, not in street clothes, but in armor. And he mentions two pieces of armor particularly, because there are two areas that you need to guard in this day of surrounding darkness. One is your heart. The other is your head. Now if you keep your heart, and you keep your head, the rest of it is pretty well taken care of. Now you're to take the breastplate of righteousness. And here he doesn't mention the breastplate of righteousness as he does, in Ephesians 6, because he has a different purpose here. Now he mentions the breastplate of faith and love. Faith and love—that is to cover your heart. You see, it is faith for God and love toward everybody.

Now that's the way you're to live in these last days, these desperate days. You need to get a bulldog grip on the eternal truths of God—the faith in God; the unmistakable, unshakeable, inerrant, infallible Word of God; promises of God; faithfulness of God; power of God—get a lock on it, you're going to need it. That'll take care of your heart—faith for God and love. It doesn't matter what people do. You're going to love the brethren, love the lost, love the Lord. Keep that love in your heart. It will keep your heart, my dear friend.

Faith and love, faith and love, faith and love—that takes care of your heart; but what about your head? It's not enough just to have your heart right—you've got to have your head right. So many people want to be all emotion, but they don't have any theology. Other people want to be all theology, but they don't have any emotion. Dear friend, Jesus was full of grace and truth. We need to have both. We need to have the grace of God in our heart, the truth of God in our head. We need for a helmet the hope of salvation.

Now that brings up a problem. You say, “The hope of salvation? Pastor, I thought we knew we were saved.” Well, you need to understand what Paul was talking about when he says, “the hope of salvation.” The word *salvation* also means “deliverance.” What he's saying is this: salvation is in three tenses—I have been saved; I am being saved; and, I shall be saved, when I repented of sin and trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior.

I was saved—that's salvation in the past tense. I was saved from the penalty of sin, and, thank God, I will never be judged for my sins, because Jesus took that judgment, and, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1). I'll never have to answer for my sins in that kind of judgment, because I settled out of court. And my sins are under the blood of Jesus. I am saved from the penalty of sin.

Day by day, now, I am being saved from the power of sin. That is sanctification. You see, He is giving me power. How do I live the Christian life? How do you live the Christian life? The Jesus who forgave my sin is the Jesus who came into me to empower me; isn't that right? Isn't He living in you? You see, that's present tense. You see, the devil has no intimidation. Sin has no allurements, the flesh has no power that the child of God cannot break and overcome depending upon Jesus Christ. And you listen to me, dear friend. If Jesus Christ cannot save you from the power of sin, He did not save you from the penalty of sin. You say, “Oh, well, He came to save me from Hell.” No, He didn't. He came to save you from sin. Now friend, if He can't save you from sin, He can't save you from Hell. *“And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). It's not the penalty of their sin, but from their sins.

Listen. I have been saved from the penalty of sin. I am being saved from the power of sin. One of these days, I shall be saved from the presence of sin. And that's what Paul is talking about now, when he talks about the helmet for the hope of salvation. That is that blessed hope, when we're caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and we are saved from that very presence of sin. When we are caught up into the bosom of our Heavenly Father, and into the arms of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a day that will be! And dear friend, you need to get a lock on that.

You need to understand the truth of God's Word, because "you'll know the truth and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32). *And when everybody else is going around wondering about what the world is coming to, you can say, "Praise God! Look whose coming to the world!"* It makes a difference, it really does. And so you take the breastplate of faith and love—that's for your heart; you take the helmet of the hope of salvation—that's for the head. And you get the head right, and you get the heart right, and you're going to be able to stay right until Jesus Christ comes for His own at the rapture of the Church.

Now what should we be doing, dear friend, in this day of surrounding darkness? The Christian should be aware, the Christian should be awake, and the Christian should be awaiting the Lord. There is the hope of salvation. We're to be looking for it.

III. A Sure Deliverance

Now the third thing and I'll be finished. First of all, I talked about sudden destruction. Secondly, I've talked about surrounding darkness. Thirdly, I want to talk about a sure deliverance, a sure deliverance. Now look with me, in verse 9: *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9–10).

Now people, there is a great debate going on in theology. Here is the debate. And good brethren, and honest brethren, are on either side of the issue. The issue is, "Will the Church go through the *day of the Lord*?" Will the church go through the Great Tribulation, or will we be taken out first? There are some who believe as I believe, that the Church will be taken out before the Tribulation begins. There are other people that believe that the Church will stay here and go through the Great Tribulation.

Now I want to make one thing abundantly clear: that all of us need to approach the subject of prophecy with great humility. Amen? And when you get right down to it, most of us had better stay on the *welcome committee* and not on the *program committee*. Amen? Whenever He comes, we'll be ready for Him to come. But I believe with my heart that the Church is going to be taken out before the Great Tribulation. And I believe there will be a sure deliverance. I believe that's what the Apostle Paul is talking about

here. And I want to give you three reasons that are right here in the Bible, why I believe that there is going to be this sure deliverance.

A. The Explanation

Number one, there is what I want to call the explanation, in verse 9. Because of the explanation. Look at the explanation in verse 9: *“For”*—and the word *for* means “because,” he’s already talked about the hope of deliverance. “Because”—look at it—*“God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation”—deliverance—“[through] our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:9). God did not appoint us to wrath. No Christian is appointed to the wrath of God.

Remember that the Tribulation is the great day of God’s wrath, but God has not appointed us to wrath. You’ll never find where God pours out His wrath upon His children. If He did, we’d suffer, die, and go to Hell. God may chastise His children, but never His wrath. Look in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 10. The Bible says we’re *“to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come”* (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Jesus saved us. Jesus delivered us from the wrath to come. This great day of His wrath is coming, but the Bible says that Jesus, by His death on the cross, kept the wrath of God from being poured out upon us. And so reason number one is the explanation, in verse 9.

B. The Expectation

Now the reason number two is the expectation, in verse 10. Look at it. The Bible says that Jesus Christ, *“died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him”* (1 Thessalonians 5:10). Now what does that mean? Whether I am in the grave or whether I’m living, whether I wake or whether I sleep, when Jesus comes, I’m going to live together with Him. We’re going to be caught up. He is talking about what He’s been talking about in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4—the rapture of the church.

You see, dear friend, those of us who are Christians should be living in the expectation of the momentary return of Jesus for His own. Isn’t that right? Jesus said, *“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh”* (Matthew 24:44). And over and over and over again, the Bible teaches the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not one shred of Scripture that has to be fulfilled before Christ comes for His church.

As a matter of fact, the Apostle Paul expected Jesus Christ to come in His day almost 2,000 years ago. When the Apostle Paul was speaking to the church at Thessalonica about the rapture of the Church, he said this—you just go back one chapter, look in chapter 4 and verse 15: *“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep”* (1 Thessalonians 4:15).

Well, Paul says, “We’re going to be living when Jesus comes, those of us who are still alive.” Paul didn’t say, “Those who will be alive.” He said, “We who remain and are alive.” It’s obvious that Paul knew that Christ could have come in his lifetime. Paul was looking for Jesus in his lifetime. “Well,” you say, “then, Paul was wrong.” No, Paul was right to be looking for Jesus to come, because that’s exactly what the Bible has taught every Christian since Jesus went away. It is that we are to be living and expecting Jesus Christ to come at any moment—at any moment. There is expectation to be ready.

Now dear friend, if I must go through the Great Tribulation, then I’m not living in the expectation of Jesus coming at any moment. I’m looking for the Great Tribulation. I’m looking for the horrors of the Great Tribulation to unroll. I cannot be expecting the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. And rather than looking up, I’m going to start looking around. And rather than listening for the shout, I’m going to be looking for the sign. But my dear friend, if I am living in that hope of that imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, I must be ready; for in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when I least expect it, Christ is coming again. Can you say, *amen* to that?

C. The Exhortation

Now listen. The third reason: not only because of the explanation, in verse 9; not only because of the expectation, in verse 10; but because of the exhortation, in verse 11. The exhortation. Look in verse 11: “*Wherefore comfort yourselves together*” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Now Paul was writing to give to these people comfort. Beloved friends, if you knew that, before Jesus came, you would go through seven years of Hell on earth, of demon infestation, of the time when all nature is going to be out of joint, when demons will roam the world, when there will be horrors upon horrors that we will talk about later, would you call the second coming of Jesus a blessed hope? “Oh,” you say, “if I’m already in a tribulation, it’d be a blessed hope. But I’ll tell you the truth—I’d rather miss the whole thing.”

Conclusion

Now friend, listen. If the Tribulation must come before Jesus comes, then do you know what the blessed hope is? Death. Welcome grave! Welcome coffin! Fortunate are those who die before this time! But Paul is speaking to those who are alive, and calling the second coming of Jesus Christ a blessed hope. And he’s saying, “Comfort one another with these words.”

Well, our time is gone, but you listen to me, dear friend. Jesus Christ is coming. It’s been 2,000 years, but I want to remind you that He came on time the first time, He died on time the first time, He rose on time the first time, and He’s coming on time the second time. It may be long, but He’s never late. Let’s bow our heads in prayer.

A Thief in the Night

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 26, 1999

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:2

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Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find 1 Thessalonians chapter 5—1 Thessalonians chapter 5? And, when you’ve found it, look up here.

A man parked his automobile in front of his house, and he did what no man should do: he left the key in the ignition, thinking he’d be right back out. When he came out, the automobile was gone. His house keys and other keys were there, in the ignition, and he felt that horrible, sinking feeling that any body would feel who’d done such a thing. He reported the automobile as stolen, but the police did not find it immediately. But, behold, the next morning, that automobile was parked in his driveway—washed, filled with gasoline, the keys back in the ignition, sitting there, pristine in condition. And, there was a note, and the note said, “I am sorry that I took your car. I was in an emergency; I had

to have transportation. The car's been washed; it has been taken care of. It is filled with gasoline, and here are some complimentary tickets to the Dallas football team, the Dallas Cowboys, for you and your wife." When he read that, the man said, "Well, you know, nobody should steal an automobile, but this man can't be all bad. Whoever it was that stole my car can't be all bad." And so, the man and his wife, who normally would not go to see the Dallas Cowboys go play football, went to see the Dallas Cowboys play football. When they returned home, the house had been cleaned out. A thief had come—a very clever thief.

I want to talk to you tonight, this afternoon, this morning, whenever it is, on this subject: "A Thief in the Night." Look, if you will, here, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5: *"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do"* (1 Thessalonians 5:1–11).

Now, the purpose of our message today is to get you ready for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, we believe with all of our heart that Jesus is coming. And, what an incredible time this is to be living between two mountain peaks—Mount Calvary, the blood-drenched slopes of Mount Calvary, and Mount Zion, the sun-lit peaks of Glory—living between the crucifixion and the coronation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, I want you to be ready.

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

—EDWARD MOTE

There are four things that'll help you to get ready, four things you need to understand, four truths that are in the passage I just read to you.

I. You Can Expect a Surprising Day

Number one—here's something you can expect: you can expect a surprising day—we can expect a surprising day. Look again in verses 1 and 2—look at it: *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night”* (1 Thessalonians 5:1–2).

Now, how does a thief in the night come? Well, he comes surprisingly. No thief ever wrote a note to you and said, “Tonight, I’m going to rob your house.” He comes when you’re not expecting it, and so it is with the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, Paul told these people, “I don’t need to remind you again of the times and the seasons” (1 Thessalonians 5:1). Now, Paul was not setting a date. What he was saying is two things: first of all, the certainty; secondly, the uncertainty. The certainty: He is coming. The uncertainty: We do not know when. He comes, but He comes as a thief in the night.

Acts chapter 1, verses 6 through 8. The disciples were there with our Lord on the Mount of Ascension. He’s getting ready to go back to Heaven. They’re like you: they wanted to know about prophecy. And, beginning in verse 6: *“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power”*—any body who sets a date is disobeying the Lord. It is not for you to know. Remember, in 1988, a man wrote a book called **88 REASONS WHY JESUS CHRIST IS COMING IN 1988?** He made a fool of himself—he made a fool of himself. The Bible says it’s not for you to know. But, He goes on to say—*“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me”* (Acts 1:6–8). And, what is He saying? “Don’t go around setting dates. Get your head out of the clouds of prophecy, and get your feet on the pavement of soul winning. And, share and get people ready for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.”

Now, I don’t know when He’s coming; you don’t know when He’s coming. We all have a feeling that He... We’re living on the edge of eternity, and that’s what this series of messages is about. And, I’ll tell you one thing: it’s 2,000 years nearer than it’s ever been before. Jesus Christ is coming. Listen, He came on time. He was born on time. He died on time. He rose on time, and He’s coming again in His own time. He may seem slow, but He will never be late. And, the Bible says that God is not in a hurry—2 Peter 3, verse 8: *“one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”* (2 Peter 3:8). You may say, “Well, it’s been 2,000 years since He promised to come again.” In God’s heart and God’s mind, it’s been no longer than two days. But, he goes on to say in that same 2 Peter passage, *“But the day of the Lord will come”* (2

Peter 3:10). It will come.

And, the Day of the Lord, as we're going to see in a moment, is a very troubling time. The Church will be taken out at the Rapture, but there's coming a time known as "the Day of the Lord," when God is going to pour out His wrath upon this world. And, I'm going to tell you this: that even now, right now, the raging waters of God's wrath are furiously pounding against the dam of His mercy. I don't know when. I know God, in mercy, is holding back this day, because in 2 Peter chapter 3, verse 9, he says, "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise...but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Peter 3:9). But, you can expect a surprising day. Jesus is going to come, and you will not be ready—or some may not be ready.

II. You Can Escape a Sudden Destruction

Here's the second thing: not only can you expect a surprising day, but you can escape a sudden destruction. Look now in verses 3 and 4: "*For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape*" (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Now, notice "*they shall not escape*" (1 Thessalonians 5:3), but he's not talking to you. If you know the Lord, you will escape. The Rapture of the Church will take you out before this day comes—this day of sudden destruction. Now, what is He talking about? He's talking about the Great Tribulation. Next Sunday, we're going to be talking about that more and more. But, there's coming a day that the Bible calls "sudden destruction," and it's right there in verse 2. He calls it "*the day of the Lord*" (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

Remember when they were crucifying Jesus? He's going down that Via Dolorosa. And, the women are weeping, and He says, "Don't weep for Me. Weep for yourselves. This is your day. My day is not yet come" (John 2:4). His day is going to come, and it's going to be a very solemn day.

Let me give you some scriptures that talk about the Day of the Lord. For example, Joel chapter 2, verses 1 and 2: "*Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong*"—now, notice this phrase—"*there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations*" (Joel 2:1–2). What's he saying? He's saying the Day of the Lord is a day that is absolutely, totally distinct. Never, never has there been a day like this. There've been unmitigated horrors of war, torture. We think of ethnic cleansing. We think about what happened in Bosnia. We think what's happening in East Samoa and these other places, and we think about the

earthquakes in Taiwan. But, what he's saying here: "there's never, never, never been a day like this day" (Joel 2:2)—that's Joel 2, verses 1 and 2.

Listen to Jeremiah chapter 30 and verse 7: *"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it"*—none is like it—*"it is even the time of Jacob's trouble"*—Jacob is the name for fleshly Jews—*"but he shall be saved out of it"* (Jeremiah 30:7). There's going to come a national deliverance for the Jews out of this Great Tribulation; he's gonna be saved out of it.

And then, Daniel chapter 12 and verse 1—Daniel speaks of this same day: *"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people"*—that is, "for the Jew"—*"and there shall be a time of trouble"*—listen to this—*"such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book"* (Daniel 12:1). Now, notice here Joel says, "There's never been the like of this day" (Joel 2:2). Jeremiah says, "There's none like it" (Jeremiah 30:7). Daniel says, "There's never been a time like this" (Daniel 12:1). And then, Jesus said in Matthew chapter 24, verse 21: *"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be"* (Matthew 24:21).

A. **A Solemn Day**

Now folks, listen to me: there is coming a solemn day. This day that you need to escape is a solemn day. Never, never, never has there been a day like it. As a matter of fact, in Revelation chapter 6, the Bible says that men are going into the caves and the dens of the earth and are going to ask the mountains to fall upon them, because they say, *"The great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"* (Revelation 6:17). The antichrist, who will rule at this time, will make Hitler seem like a Boy Scout.

B. **A Sudden Day**

It's going to be a solemn day; it's going to be a sudden day. Notice again in verse 3: *"when they...say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction"* (1 Thessalonians 5:3). It's like the calm before the storm. In this kind of preaching, you're called a "calamity howler," but this world is going to be caught by surprise, because it will not hear, and it will not heed, God's Word.

It was the same in Noah's time. This is one reason I don't believe the Church is going to go through the Great Tribulation: because the Great Tribulation is not a time of peace and safety, but the time of peace and safety is when this day comes, when it comes, and we're delivered out of it. Notice how it was in Noah's time. Put in your margin "Matthew 24, verses 36 and following." Jesus said, again, talking about His coming, *"Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only"*—now, watch this—*"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming*

of the Son of man be”—now, what were the days of Noah like? Well, listen—*“For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be”* (Matthew 24:36–39). Now, what was it like? Well, the daily round of life was going on. They were having weddings, they were having parties, they were having business, they were just going on—that’s the day of Noah. And then, one day, God said, “Noah, come on out; come on into the ark.” And then, the flood came; and then, it was too late. It will be a solemn day; it will be a sudden day.

Now, I know that what I’m talking about doesn’t fit the intelligentsia of this day and this age. I can imagine a convocation back in Noah’s time: Noah’s been preaching that God’s going to destroy the world with a flood; and so, they decided they better at least have a convocation about it—find out whether this calamity howler is telling the truth or not. And so, I can see, upon the dais, they have three very important people up there. They have a scientist, Dr. Francis Formaldehyde. And then, up there, they also have a philosopher, Dr. Flavius Fluffyhead. And, up there, also, they have a minister, a cleric, Dr. Earnest Eartickler. And, they’re up there on the platform, and they’re having a symposium to find out whether or not the flood is going to come.

And so, first of all, they ask this imminent scientist, Dr. Francis Formaldehyde, “Dr. Formaldehyde, will there be a flood?” And, he says, “Well, science cannot speak to these things. You know, we only deal with empirical proof, but I can tell you that since the time that we have measured history there has never been a break in the reign of natural law. So, from a scientific point of view, I would say that it’s very doubtful that we’ll have this kind of a flood.” Well, people are feeling a little better.

And so, then they ask Dr. Flavius Fluffyhead. Now, Dr. Fluffyhead—he’s, you know, he’s a finger bumper. And, he sits there, and he just smiles benignly. And, he says, “Well, uh...I...uh...philosophy deals with these areas where science cannot, but let me say philosophically that it would seem to me, from a philosophical point of view, that if there is a God, and if this God did create this world, and if He did create these people, the same God who created them knows their weaknesses and their proclivities. And, that’s the way He made them, and He certainly would not destroy His work, if, indeed, He did such a thing. Philosophically, I would say no, I don’t believe there will be a flood.”

And then, they will call upon the reverend to talk. Now, Dr. Earnest Eartickler. “Well, Dr. Eartickler, you have been off to the seminary, and you have studied; and you have poured through the realms of knowledge. Tell us, Dr. Eartickler, will there be a flood?” Now, he’s not as dispassionate as the scientists or the philosophers. As a matter of fact, he’s downright angry; he’s red in the face. He points a finger at God’s man (at Noah), and he says, “This unlettered, uneducated, un-seminary-trained religious fanatic has

slandered the character of God. Doesn't he know that God is love? And, does he think that a loving God would bring judgment? I can tell you, ladies and gentlemen, if Noah did happen to hear something about a flood, it was not literal water." "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be" (Matthew 24:37).

C. **A Sure Day**

You see, this day is a solemn day; this day will be a surprising day. They're eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage. And then, I'm going to say, folks, it is a sure day. Look again, if you will, in this passage of Scripture—verse 3: *"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child"* (1 Thessalonians 5:3). You see, the world is pregnant with judgment, and this solemn day—this sudden day—is a sure day. What he's saying is it's like a woman who's going to give birth.

One woman was about seven months along, and somebody said to her husband, "Is your wife expecting?" He said, "She's not expecting; it's a sure thing." And so it is—so it is—with this judgment.

Now, we can't escape this judgment, and I'm going to tell you about that later on.

III. **You Must Endure a Surrounding Darkness**

First of all, we can expect a surprising day. Number two: We can escape a sudden destruction. Number three: We must endure a surrounding darkness. Look in verses 4 through 8: *"But ye, brethren"—talking about the saved—"are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath"* (1 Thessalonians 5:4–9).

Now, we must endure a surrounding darkness. The world, right now, is already in darkness: moral darkness, spiritual darkness, social darkness, and political darkness. And, we must not be asleep. The world is asleep. The world has been chloroformed by the devil, and the world is asleep in a drunken stupor. Now, let me tell you what you should do as a child of God today. Listen to me.

A. **Be Aware and Wise Up**

Number one: You should be aware and wise up. Look in verse 5: *"Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness"* (1 Thessalonians 5:5). And so, what you need to do is to be aware, to wise up. We're the only ones—the only ones—in this world today, who can make sense of what is going

on. We need to be aware. Are you aware of these things? That's why I'm preaching this series of messages. We may not see a new millennium. Jesus is coming. You say, "Well, everything looks fine." That's exactly my point. *"When they...say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction"* (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

B. Be Awake and Get Up

We should be aware and wise up, and we should be awake and get up. Look in verses 6 and 7: *"Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night"* (1 Thessalonians 5:6–7). Folks come to church on Sunday morning with a sign around their neck that says, "Please don't disturb." I hope that this sermon will not be a lullaby, but that it'll be a reveille—it'll be an alarm clock—to wake you up. The stage is being set, and *the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is not a theory to be discussed; it's a truth to be lived*. You're not supposed to put on a white robe and go sit on a mountaintop. Jesus said, "You occupy it until I come" (Luke 19:13). What does it mean to *occupy*? If you have an occupation, that's your job. Get busy bringing this world to Jesus Christ.

C. Be Alert and Dress Up

Here's a third thing: not only should you be aware and wise up, and be awake and get up; you should be alert and dress up. Look in verse 8: *"let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation"* (1 Thessalonians 5:8). There are two things that you need to be wearing when you walk out of this auditorium.

1. The Breastplate of Faith and Love

First of all, you need to get your heart right; that's the breastplate of faith and love that covers your heart. You need to love Jesus; you need to love one another. You need to put your faith where God put your sins: on the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the breastplate; you need to wear that. If you don't wear that, you're not ready to live in these dark days.

2. The Helmet of Salvation

And then, not only keep your heart right, but you keep your head right. Put on the helmet of salvation, the helmet of the hope of salvation. Now, what does he mean by *"the hope of salvation?"* (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Does that mean, "I hope I'm saved"? No, that isn't what that means at all. You're not to have a hope-so salvation; you're to have a know-so salvation. And, why does the Bible use the words *"the hope of salvation"* (1 Thessalonians 5:8)? Because the Bible uses the word *hope* in a way that we don't use it today. In the Bible, the word *hope* means "absolute certainty, rock-rib certainty, based on the Word of God." For example, the Second Coming of Jesus is called *"the blessed hope"* (Titus 2:13).

You are to have your heart covered with faith and love, and you are to have a helmet of absolute certainty that you're saved. I would not go one day without knowing that I'm saved. Listen. God in Heaven is listening to me. I would not go one day not knowing that I'm saved—willingly go that day for one million or one billion dollars—not one day. You need to know that you know that you know that you're saved. We are living in surrounding darkness. Put on the breastplate of faith and love, and put on the helmet of the hope, the certainty, of salvation. You need to be alert and dress up.

IV. You Will Experience a Sure Deliverance

Now, here's the fourth and final thing I want to say that this passage teaches us. What we can expect: a surprising day. What we can escape: a sudden destruction. We must endure a surrounding darkness. The world is in darkness; we're not. We're children of light. But, here's the fourth and final thing: we will experience a sure deliverance. If we do these other things, we will experience a sure deliverance.

Look, beginning in verse 9; now, look at this. There are some theologians who believe that the Church is going to go through the Great Tribulation, this day that I told you about; there's none other like it. But, look at this: *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ”*—the word *salvation* means “deliverance,” deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ—*“Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him”*—now, watch this—*“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do”* (1 Thessalonians 5:9–11). Now, the fact that Jesus Christ is coming at any moment is a fact that will comfort, and it will edify.

Now, I want to tell you why I believe that the Church is going to be taken out before the Great Tribulation, and I want to give you three reasons. You're going to find them right here. I want you to write these three words down: explanation, expectation, and edification.

A. Explanation

Now, in explanation—look in verse 9. How does Paul explain it? *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath”* (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Remember that the Tribulation is the great day of His wrath? God chastises His children, but God never pours His wrath upon His children. God's wrath is for the unsaved, and *“God hath not appointed us to wrath”* (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Go back to the first chapter of this book, 1 Thessalonians 1, verse 9—look at it: *“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come”* (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10). Jesus *“delivered us*

from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

I'll give you two classic examples. We've talked about in the day of Noah. In the day of Noah, the flood did not come until Noah was taken out and put in the ark. The other classic example is the day of Lot. And, by the way, in Luke chapter 17, Jesus also said, "As it was in the days of Lot"—when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorra with brimstone—"that's the way it's going to be when I come again" (Luke 17:28). And, what were the days of Lot marked by? Do you know what the days of Lot... Lot lived in Sodom. The days of Lot were marked by sexual perversion, and the days of Lot were marked by economic prosperity. The Dow Jones, if they had had one, would've been very high the day the fire fell on Sodom. "How do you know that, Adrian?" The Bible says in the Book of Ezekiel, "This was the sin of your sister Sodom, idleness, and fullness of bread. And they were not ashamed when they committed abomination; they didn't strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy" (Ezekiel 16:49–50). But, you think about this: the sexual abomination, the sin that used to slink down back allies, struts down main streets. They were not ashamed; they couldn't blush. But, there was so much idleness and fullness of bread that they didn't even need to work! I'm telling you, it was a time of economic prosperity, and it was a time of sexual perversion. And, Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Lot...", "as it was in Noah...", "as it was in the days of Lot..."

Now listen, before the flood came, God took Noah out, and God put Noah in the ark. Before God destroyed Sodom with fire and brimstone, the angel said to Lot, "Come and get out of the city. I can't do anything until you come out of this city" (Genesis 19:15). God would not pour His wrath upon His man Lot, even though Lot was a compromising, worldly Christian. Lot was taken out before the fire fell. Noah was taken out before the flood came. And so, first of all, there's an explanation. Look at it, again, in verse 9: *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

B. Expectation

Now, not only is there an explanation, but there's an expectation. Look in verse 10: *"Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him"* (1 Thessalonians 5:10). Now, Paul was expecting Christ. He says, "we." Paul was expecting Jesus in his lifetime. Was Paul wrong? No, Paul was right. You go back to chapter 4 and verse 17: Paul is explaining this rapture, and he says, *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). He included himself. I mean, that was 2,000 years ago; 2,000 years ago, they were living on the edge of eternity. We're always on the edge of eternity. The Apostle John said in his first epistle, *"Little children, it is the last time"* (1 John 2:18). And so, Paul was expecting Christ. You should be expecting Christ.

Now, here's the point—here's the point: if the Tribulation comes first, then we're not looking for Christ; we're looking for antichrist. Paul was looking for the Lord Jesus Christ. When you're looking for the Tribulation to come, rather than looking up, you're looking around.

C. Edification

Now, here's the third and the final reason, and I'm finished. I'm telling you, folks, why we need to be looking for Jesus at any moment. First of all, there's an explanation: we're not appointed to wrath. Secondly, there's an expectation: Jesus can come at any moment. Thirdly, there is the edification. Look in verse 11: *"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do"* (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Now, the fact that Jesus is coming at any moment is a great comfort and a great edification. If I believe that the Church is going to go through seven years of a day so horrible, so terrible that Jesus said, and Jeremiah said, and Daniel said, and Joel said, "There's never, never, never, never, never been a day like that," you think that'll edify me? Even so, come, Great Tribulation? No. *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus"*—*"Even so, come, Lord Jesus"* (Revelation 22:20). I'm not looking for the antichrist; I'm looking for Christ. I'm waiting for the trumpet sound at any moment. Just as God said, "Noah, go into that ark," and just as God said, "Lot, get out of that city," He's going to say, "Adrian, come up hither," and the trumpet will sound. We're going to meet Jesus *just like that*.

Conclusion

Now folks, this is serious business. We can expect a surprising day. We can escape a sudden destruction. We must endure a surrounding darkness. And friend, we can experience a sure deliverance.

Will you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. I wonder how many can say, in this auditorium, "Pastor Rogers, if Jesus Christ were to come at this moment, like a thief in the night, suddenly, surely, to take away His Church, I would be ready." While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you just lift your hand as a testimony? Don't lift it if you can't do it. All right. Now, take them down. I didn't even look to see who lifted his or her hand. Really, I didn't want to know—it's not all that much my business. I want you to answer the question for you—for you.

Now, if you couldn't lift your hand, I've got good news for you: you can put on, today, the breastplate of faith and love. You can put on the helmet of salvation. You can be saved today, once and for all, now and forever, by trusting Jesus Christ. And, I want you to pray this prayer, and I want you to pray it from your heart: "Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus, right now, this moment,

with all of my heart, like a child. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus”—pray that from your heart—“save me, Jesus.”

Did you ask Him? Then, thank Him. Pray this way: “Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood. I believe that You were raised from the dead, and I now just thank You for saving me. You’re my Lord, my Savior, my Master. Begin, now, to make me the person You want me to be, and I’ll live for You—not in order to be saved, but because I am saved. And, I will not be ashamed of You. I’ll make it public, if You’ll just give me the strength. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

The Best Is Yet to Be

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 28, 1991

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

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Introduction

Take God's Word and turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, would you please, as we continue our journey through 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians, studying the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, under this title: “Our Coming King.” And today, we come to a wonderful, wonderful passage that I have entitled, “The Best is Yet to Be.” And may I say, even before I read this scripture, what a glorious time this is to be living, what a wonderful time between the two mountain peaks of history: the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the coronation of Jesus Christ. May I also tell you that my joy today will be full and complete, if you can get it written in your heart indeed that Jesus is coming and that you can not only know that He's coming, but anticipate His coming with a deep, deep anticipation.

I begin to read 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 1: *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do”* (1 Thessalonians 5:1–11).

Now

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh may I then in Him be found.
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

—EDWARD MOTE

That’s what I want you to do, and that’s what I want you to be. So therefore, taken from this passage of Scripture, four truths, I want to lay them upon your heart. They are four basic wonderful admonitions that are in these verses: chapter 5, verses 1 through 11, that I have read to you, four things I want you to see, in the light of the soon coming of our Lord. And the very first of these I want you to learn of is His coming. I want you to learn of His coming.

I. Learn of His Coming

Now look at verses 1 and 2: *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly...”* (1 Thessalonians 5:1–2). Now that’s what I want for you. I want you, my dear friend, to know some things perfectly, completely. *“For you have no need that I write unto you.”* Evidently, the Apostle Paul had already instructed these people—they had learned of His coming: *“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night”* (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

Now there are two things that they had learned of His coming: they had learned of the certainty of His coming; they had learned of the uncertainty of the time—the certainty of His coming; and the uncertainty of the time. And that’s the reason that He

said of the times and the seasons, “you have no need that I write unto you.” What he is saying is, “I’m not about to set a date for you.” And may I tell you that anybody who sets a date for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is approaching, if He’s not already crossed over, the line of blasphemy. For the Bible teaches very clearly and very plainly, and our Lord taught it in Matthew chapter 24: *“that day and [that] hour knoweth no man”* (Matthew 24:36). And just before our Lord was taken up into glory, the disciples asked Him this question—they said, in Acts chapter 1 and verse 6: “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). And He said, in verse 7: “It’s not given unto you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power” (Acts 1:7). No one knows the day when Jesus Christ is coming again.

A while back, a man wrote a book: *88 Reasons Why Jesus Christ Will Come in 1988*. How many of you heard or saw that book somewhere? There it is, look all over this congregation: *88 Reasons Why Jesus Christ Is Going to Come in 1988*. When I saw that, I did not need to read the book. Many of you—some of our church members—were shoving that book on me: “Pastor, you ought to read this; you ought to read that.” I said, “I don’t have to read that.” My dear friend, *“That day and [that] hour knoweth no man”* (Matthew 24:36). And if any man tells me that Jesus Christ is coming in 1988, or any other date, I’m telling you, he is near, if he’s not already crossed, the line of blasphemy. *“Of the times and the seasons...ye have no need that I write unto you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:1), the Apostle Paul said. Jesus said, *“[It’s not given unto] you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power”* (Acts 1:7). And the Lord says, *That day and [that] hour knoweth no man”* (Matthew 24:36).

Now my dear friend, when you learn of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, you need to learn of the certainty of His coming. The uncertainty of the time: the Lord comes as a thief in the night—verse 2. Any thief ever told you, “I’m coming this day in 1988?” Of course not. Our Lord is coming as a thief in the night. Now you say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, why has Jesus Christ not yet come?” I’ll tell you why our Lord has not yet come: *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). The Lord is waiting on you, sir, to be saved. He’s waiting on you, madam, to be saved. But one of these days, soon and very soon perhaps, Jesus will come.

You see, it is the mercy of God that holds back the Second Coming of Jesus. But the justice of God and the judgment of God says one day He will come. Even now, the raging waters of God’s wrath are furiously pounding against the dam of His mercy. And one of these days, the dam of God’s mercy will give way to God’s judgment, and the Day of the Lord will come. *“One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”* (2 Peter 3:8), the Apostle Peter tells us. You say, “Well, it’s

been 2,000 years since Jesus Christ went away and promised to come again.” Well then, my dear friend, it’s 2,000 years nearer than it used to be. And we are coming, and we are nearer to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ than any generation has ever been.

You can put it down big, put it down plain, put it down straight, that God, our God, is never ahead of time, and He is never late. Jesus Christ came on time. Jesus Christ died on time. Jesus Christ arose on time. Jesus Christ is coming again on time. *“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power”* (Acts 1:7). But my dear friend, our Lord is coming as a thief in the night. And I want you to learn of His coming.

Education may be costly; but—I’ll tell you—ignorance is far more costly. And that’s the reason the Apostle Paul said, in the prior chapter, chapter 4: “There are certain things I would not have you to be ignorant of” (1 Thessalonians 4:13)—chapter 4, verse 13—concerning the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So ladies and gentlemen, listen to this. I want you to learn of the coming of our Lord. It is not incidental in the Word of God; it is fundamental to the Word of God. Over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over again, the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth. And if you want something that will cause this book and the Old Testament prophecies to burst aflame in your heart and in your life, learn, learn, learn the wonderful truths of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

II. Look for His Coming

Second thing this passage tells us that we must do: not only should we learn of His coming, but we should look for His coming. We should look for His coming. That is, He may come at any moment. Look again, in verse 2: *“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety...”* (1 Thessalonians 5:2–3). Somebody sitting in our congregation today says, “Oh, I’m all right. You’re not going to get me excited about this thing. I’m at peace with myself, and I’m perfectly safe.” But *“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief”* (1 Thessalonians 5:3–4).

Now when Jesus Christ comes, there will be the Rapture of the Church. The Church will be taken out, and taken up to meet her Lord in the air: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up...to meet the Lord in the air”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). That could

happen at any moment. And when that happens, then the Day of the Lord begins. Look at it—look at it: *“Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night”* (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

Now what is this Day of the Lord? What is this Day of the Lord?

A. It is a Solemn Day

Let me tell you, my dear friend, it is a solemn day. I’m going to give you some scriptures—I want you to jot them in your margin. I gave them to you two other times; but I want you to jot them in your margin, and I’m going to share them with you. These scriptures tell of the Great Tribulation that is coming on the Earth that begins after the Rapture of the Church—it is called the Day of the Lord. And first of all, it is a solemn day. Joel chapter 2, verses 1 and 2—the Bible says, *“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong”*—and then listen to what Joel says about the Day of the Lord—*“there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations”* (Joel 1:1–2).

Now what is Joel saying? Joel says, “Sound the alarm! The Day of the Lord will come, and there’s never been a day like it.” The prophet Jeremiah said the same thing in Jeremiah chapter 30 and verse 7. Jeremiah said, *“Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble...”*—Jacob is the name for fleshly Jews—*“the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it”* (Jeremiah 30:7). The Jews are going to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ during this time of Great Tribulation. Daniel chapter 12 and verse 1—listen to this. The Bible says, *“And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time”* (Daniel 12:1). Joel said it, Jeremiah said it, Daniel said it, and Jesus Christ said it, in Matthew chapter 24 and verse 21. Jesus said, *“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be”* (Matthew 24:21).

Never, never, never, never has there been a time like this time. And that’s what the Apostle Paul was talking about when he says the Day of the Lord is going to come as a thief in the night. And my dear friend, if Jesus Christ comes today, and those who are saved in this auditorium are taken out, you are going to be left to go into the Great Tribulation, the Day of the Lord: there has never ever, ever, ever been any time like it. You can take all of the horrors this world has ever known, and compound them, and you will have just a faint description of what the Day of the Lord will be. It is a solemn day.

B. It is a Surprising Day

Second thing I want to say about it, my friend: it is a surprising day. Verse 2 says He is coming as a thief in the night. People will be living with a sense of peace and safety and security. That's the reason I do not believe that the Church is going to go through the Great Tribulation. It is coming, my dear friend, as a thief in the night. The world is going to be caught by surprise, and people are going to be going about the normal round of living, when our Lord Jesus Christ comes for His own. And the Lord Jesus illustrated it by Noah. In Matthew chapter 24, verse 36, Jesus is talking about the fact that His coming will be a surprise—he said, *“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”* Now listen to it: *“For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage... until the flood came, and took them all away”* (Matthew 24:36–39). Here they are, eating, drinking, just like you'll do—go home, sit down for your meal. The day was bright and fair, no thought whatever, not a storm cloud in the sky, marrying and giving in marriage. And suddenly, cataclysmically, the fountains of the great deep were broken up; the heavens were emptied, and the flood came and carried them all away. You see, over and over the Bible tells us, “Be ready. Be ready. I'm coming as a thief in the night.”

I read some time ago about a man who had stepped into a store to buy some things, and he did a very foolish thing: he left his car keys in the ignition, and he also left on his car keys, his house keys, there in the ignition. When he came back out, his car was gone. He said, “How stupid of me. How could I have done that? I was only in there just a moment.” And he was muttering to himself about human nature and how terrible things were, that somebody would steal his car, just been in the store a few moments. Well, of course, he reported it to the police and all of that. But the next morning, when he came out, there was his car sitting in the driveway. Not only was it sitting there, it was washed, vacuumed out, and he opened the door. There were the keys, and there was a note there. And it said, “Sir, I'm ashamed to admit it, but I took your car.” He said, “I was in a dire emergency. What I did was terribly wrong. I'm very sorry. I needed the use of your car.” He said, “I have washed it; here is a full tank of gasoline, and here are two tickets for the Dallas football game—the Dallas Cowboys, right here. I want you to enjoy the game, and, if you can find in your heart, please forgive me. I'm sorry.”

Well, the guy was saying, “Well, maybe human nature's not that bad after all. I mean the guy stole my car, but maybe it was an emergency.” He went in and told his wife, he said, “You won't believe this. There's our car, why, it's not hurt, not a scratch. And look—we've got tickets. I've always wanted to go to a Dallas Cowboys game.” They went to the game, and, when they came home, their house had been cleaned out. He also had the house key.

“As a thief in the night,” when you will least expect it: that’s when the Lord Jesus Christ is going to come.

C. **It is a Sure Day**

My dear friend, this Day of the Lord is a solemn day, it is a surprising day, and I’ll tell you something else about it: it is a sure day. Notice the last part of verse 3. It says also it is coming “*as travail upon a woman with child*” (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Now what he is saying is this world is pregnant with judgment—as travail, as labor pains upon a woman with child. What he’s saying is this: the day is going to come, just as surely as a birth is going to come, just as surely as that baby is going to come, this judgment is going to come. It is a sure day. Our world is on a collision course with judgment.

Years ago, I heard about an admiral who was out leading maneuvers. He had the war ships out there, it was at nighttime, and someone came to the admiral: “Admiral, our ship is approaching a light straight on. What do you want us to do?” It was at nighttime. The admiral said, “Send them a message and tell them to alter their course 30 degrees to the right.” So they radioed a message ahead, and said to that bright light out there that was unidentified, “Alter your course, 30 degrees to the right.” A message came back and said, “You alter your course 30 degrees to the right.” The admiral was a little nonplussed. He said, “Send them back a message, and tell them this is a battleship—you alter your course 30 degrees to the right.” They sent back a message and said, “You alter your course 30 degrees to the right.” Well, the admiral said, “You send them this message: you tell them I am the admiral, I’m in a battleship, and I said to alter your course 30 degrees to the right!” The message came back and said, “I am a seaman first class, I am in a lighthouse. You alter your course 30 degrees to the right.” God’s lighthouse is not going to move for this generation, folks.

I want to tell you that we are on a collision course with disaster. And this Day of the Lord is a solemn day; it is a surprising day. People are going to say, “Peace and safety.” But it is a sure day as a woman in travail. Martin Luther said he only had two days on his calendar: today and that day. You live today for Jesus Christ, and get ready for that day as if that day were to begin this day.

III. **Live for His Coming**

Now there’s a third thing I want you to do about the Lord Jesus Christ and His coming that I believe is taught in this passage of Scripture. Not only should you learn of His coming and know of some things perfectly; and, not only should you look for His coming, because He is coming at any moment as a thief in the night, a surprising day; but, dear friend, we need to live for His coming. That’s the third thing: to live for His coming. Begin now in verse 5: “*Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the*

day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:5–8).

Now the Apostle Paul says that we are living in dark times. It is dark. Morally, it is dark. Spiritually, it is dark. Socially, it is dark. Politically, we are living in darkness. And not only is it dark, but the people of this world are asleep. They have been chloroformed by the spirit of this age. And those who are not asleep are in a drunken stupor, as it were, in verse 7. Look at it: *“They that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night”* (1 Thessalonians 5:7). That’s the way the world is. The world is in darkness. Half the people are asleep to the darkness that we’re in; the other half are living wild, high and handsome, drunk in the night. But he goes on to say we are not in darkness, we are not children of darkness, and therefore, there are three things that we ought to do to live for his coming.

A. The Christian Should Be Aware

First of all, the Christian should be aware. Look in verse 5: *“Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness”* (1 Thessalonians 5:5). We are the only ones, dear friend, who can make sense of what is happening. Dear old Dr. Vance Havner, who’s now in Heaven, used to say, “You can take a child of God, give him a Bible and a candle, and put him in a dungeon, and he will know more about what is going on in this world than all the wiseacres in the Congress and the Pentagon put together.” Friend, we are not in darkness that that day should overtake us as a thief. We are not of the night; we are not of the darkness.

B. The Christian Should Be Awake

Number one, in order to live for His coming, you need to be aware and you need to wise up; but, number two, because you are aware, you need to be awake. Look in verse 6: *“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober”* (1 Thessalonians 5:6). Be aware and wise up, be awake, my dear friend and get up. Do you know the problem with many churches today? They are not preaching the Second Coming of Jesus Christ; they think it is an odd and weird doctrine. And so many sermons today are like bedtime stories and lullabies. And God’s alarm clock is going off all over this world. And God tells the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, “Wake up!” Many people come to church on Sunday morning, and if you have the eyes to see it, they have a sign hung around their neck that says, “Please do not disturb.” They just want to sleep and sleep in the night. What is God saying? In verse 5, He is saying, “Wise up!” In verse 6, He is saying, “Wake up and get up!”

C. The Christian Should Be Alert

But not only, my dear friend, do we need to be aware and wise up, and not only do we need to be aware and get up, but, dear friend, we need to be alert and dress up! Look, if you will now, in verse 8: *“But let us who, are of the day...”*—now, these are the ones who know it’s time to get up, they wake up, they get up and—*“[we], who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation”* (1 Thessalonians 5:8). How, my dear friend, are you to be living in these days in which we live? Well, you are to get up, and you are to dress up, and the very first thing you are to put on is the breastplate of faith and love—faith toward God, and love toward God and your fellow man. Beware of that to protect your heart. You better keep your heart these days; you better keep on that breastplate of faith and love. And then, at the same time, you better put on for a helmet the hope of salvation to protect your head. You’ve got to keep your heart right and you’ve got to keep your head right in these days. That’s what he is saying. Get out of bed, put on the breastplate of faith and love, put for a helmet the hope of salvation.

Now what does he mean, “the hope of salvation”? Does he mean you hope you’re saved? You’re not sure, but you think you may be saved? Not at all! I have told you this so many times, but learn it one more time. When the Bible uses the word *hope*, it does not use the word *hope* like modern Americans use the word *hope*. Like, “Are we going to win the ballgame?” “Well, I hope so.” Oh, my dear friend, the Bible word *hope*—listen—is a divine certainty based on the Word of God. That’s what the word *hope* means in the Bible: “a divine certainty.” Like, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is called *the blessed hope*. Well, that doesn’t mean He might come. It means we can hardly wait for Him to get here, and we know He’s coming, because the Word of God has promised it.

Now you are to put on the hope of salvation, the divine certainty of salvation, based on the Word of God. First John 5, verse 13: *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life”* (1 John 5:13). Friend, I’m telling you I would be petrified to live in these days and not know that I’m saved—not know that I’m saved. You better protect your heart and protect your head. You better have that breastplate, my dear friend, of faith and love. And a helmet of the assurance of your salvation based on the Word of God. *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”*

How do you live for His coming? Well, you wise up, you wake up, and you dress up! My dear friend, be aware of His coming; be awake at His coming; be alert; be sober. That’s what he’s saying—that’s what he’s saying. Are you understanding this? Is this getting through? Is God speaking to you today? Don’t you know that God brought you

here to get you ready for these things? This is not just some exercise in talking. This is not a club that we've met to listen to some esoteric, interesting subject. God is saying to you, "Get ready—get ready."

IV. Long for His Coming

The last thing I want to say, my dear friend: not only should you learn of His coming; not only should you look for His coming, because He's coming at any moment; not only should you live for His coming; but oh, my friend, you need to long for His coming. That's the last thing. You need to long for His coming. Now continue to read in verse 9: *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9–10). With Him, the One who died for me. I long to see the Lord Jesus Christ. I long for that time when my faith shall be sight. I long for that time, for Him having not seen, I love. Now seeing, I will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. I long for Jesus Christ to come again.

A. This Is a Truth that Comforts

You see, this is a truth that comforts. You say, "Pastor, are you trying to frighten me?" Only if you're lost am I trying to frighten you. If you're saved, I'm trying to comfort you. Look in verse 11: *"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do"* (1 Thessalonians 5:11). There's no more comforting or edifying truth than the soon coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now again, why it's such a comfort, and why we long for it's coming, is this: that the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be taken out before the Great Tribulation, before the Day of the Lord comes.

B. Three Reasons Why the Church is Not Going Through the Great Tribulation

Now we're going to say more about that as we continue in this series, but, right now, because they are right before us, I'm going to give you three reasons why the Church is not going to go through the Great Tribulation. Right here, and that ought to cause you to long for His coming.

1. The Explanation to the Church

The very first reason is the word *explanation*. He gives us an explanation in verse 9: *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Now the tribulation is the great day of His wrath. But God has not appointed us to wrath. Go back to the chapter 1, if you will, and look in verse 9: *"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come"* (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10). The wrath

to come is the Great Tribulation. When Jesus comes, He will deliver us from the wrath to come. That's the reason, as we see the day approaching, we need to long for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

God's children are recipients of His chastisement. And my dear friend, if you disobey Him, whom the Father loves He'll chasten, and He'll carry you to the woodshed. But that, my dear friend, is not God's wrath; that is God's chastisement for His own. The wrath of God is going to be poured out upon this world after the Rapture of the Church. And so the reason number one is the explanation, in verse 9.

2. The Expectation of the Church

Number two, the expectation, in verse 10. Look at the expectation in verse 10: "*Who died for us...*"—he's talking about Jesus—"who died for us, that, whether"—what's that next little word? Whether what? I can't hear you... we—"whether we wake or sleep we should live together with him" (1 Thessalonians 5:10). Who wrote this? The Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul was expecting Jesus to come in his life. You say, "Was the Apostle Paul wrong?" No, he was right. Every Christian should be expecting Jesus to come in his life. There are no signs, no tribulation, nothing else that is going to happen, no temple rebuilt, no Antichrist, no covenant, no this, no that. If these things happen, there are just coming events that are just casting shadows ahead of time. But I am telling you, my dear friend, you are not waiting for any sign; you are waiting for Jesus to come at any moment. There is an explanation—God has not appointed us to wrath. There is an expectation—we are waiting, waiting for Jesus to come as a thief in the night, as any moment Jesus Christ is coming again.

3. The Exhortation of the Church

And then, last of all, not only is there an explanation, and an expectation, but there's an exhortation. Look, if you will, in verse 11: "*Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another*" (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Now my dear friend, there would be no comfort if we knew that we're not waiting for Jesus, but we're waiting for the tribulation. Can you imagine somebody closing the Bible and saying, "Even so, come tribulation"? No, you'd say, "Welcome death, welcome coffin, welcome grave." But no, my friend—we're waiting for Jesus to come, and we need to be longing, longing for His coming.

I read somewhere about some fishermen who would go out and stay for days on the sea, fishing, and then, they would come home to the little fishing village, and their wives and children, of course, would be there in the village. One day, after they had been out, the skipper was on the deck, and he had his glass, and he was looking, and he saw the wharf. He saw the little village. He said, "There's Bill's Mary; there's Sam's Elizabeth; there's John's Rachel." But one of the fishermen didn't hear his wife's name called. And when the ship came to the shore, and those wives came and put their arms around those smelly old fishermen and kissed them. But this one fisherman, he just went right

on through the crowd, and went up the steep there and to where his cottage was, and threw open the door, and there was his wife. And she said, “Sweetheart, so good to have you home. I’ve been waiting for you.” He said, “Ah yes, but you weren’t watching for me like the other wives.”

Conclusion

Friend, you know I don’t want to just be waiting for Jesus. I want to be watching for Jesus. You know, the Bible says there’s a special blessing to those who watch for His coming. Oh, my friend, what does this passage tell us that we’ve just read today? It’s so simple, yet so sweet. We should learn of His coming! We should look for His coming! We should live for His coming! We should long for His coming! And all of God’s people ought to say, *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus”* (Revelation 22:20).

Marriage: The Real Thing

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 7, 1989

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:23

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23

Outline

Introduction

I. Union of Bodies

II. Union of Souls

III. Union of Spirits

Conclusion

Introduction

Justin and Becky, I see here that you’ve set your wedding date for July 8, 1979, at 7:00. Is that the right date? Okay, we want to be certain about that. Now Justin, you say you love this girl, is that right? “Absolutely.” And Becky, you love this man? “Yes, I do.” Are you ready to spend the rest of your life with him as his wife? All right, that’s very wonderful. I cannot impress upon you enough the seriousness of this thing that we call marriage, and I want to talk to you a little bit about the nature of marriage. But, before I talk to you about the nature of marriage, I want to talk to you about the nature of mankind. I want you to understand how God made us as human beings, because when you understand how God made us as human beings, then you understand what marriage is all about.

Now, when God made us, He made us in His image. And, God is a triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And so, there are three parts to the nature of God: God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three in One and One in three. And, you’re made in the image of God—you’re made in the image of God. And, there are three parts to your nature: you are body, soul, and spirit. And, the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, 23: *“and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23). So, sitting there is a spirit, soul, and a body. Okay? Sitting there is a spirit, a soul, and a body. Now, when you come together, your spirit, soul, and body is going to be united with His Spirit, soul, and body.

Now, for a long time, I didn't know the difference between spirit, soul, and body. I knew the difference between body and spirit, but I didn't know the difference between spirit and soul. I thought they were basically the same thing—just an invisible part of a man, maybe synonymous. Maybe one time you would say, “spirit” and another time you would say, “soul.” But, the Bible teaches there's a difference between spirit and soul. Now, this may seem very complicated, and you might be asking yourself right now, “What on earth does this have to do with marriage?” But, stay with me, and you'll understand what it has to do with marriage, because it'll help you understand what marriage is all about.

The Bible says in Hebrews 4:12 that *“the word of God is quick, and powerful”* and that it divides between *“soul and spirit.”* What is the difference? Well, let me explain it. With your body you have physical life and physical relationships; we know the physical world—roughly speaking, the world beneath us. With our soul we have psychological life. The Greek word for soul is *psyche*; it's the word we get *psychology* from—*psyche*. And so, with your soul you have psychological life. The soul is the self, the ego, the “I,” the “me,” the soul. And so, with our souls we have psychological relationships, but what about our spirit? Well, our spirit is that part of our nature that truly makes us in the image of God, for the Bible says, *“God is a Spirit”* (John 4:24). And, with our spirit, we have spiritual relationships. We know God through the spirit. The Bible says that when we get saved, God's *“Spirit [bears] witness with our spirit, that we are...children of God”* (Romans 8:16). And, the Spirit of God dwells in Christians, the Holy Spirit in the human spirit—that's what makes us a Christian.

Now plants, like these plants—they have a body, but they don't have a soul. Animals have a body and a soul, but they don't have a spirit. Only man has a spirit—and woman, of course. I'm using man in the larger sense. So, Justin, you're body, soul, and spirit. With your body you know the world beneath you. With your soul you know the world around you. With your spirit you know the world above you. When your body is right, you are healthy. When your soul is right, you're happy. When your spirit is right, you're holy. God wants you to be healthy, and happy, and holy. But, in reverse order, first of all: holy—holy.

All right now, what does that have to do with marriage? Well, you need to understand who's getting married. A body, soul, and spirit is marrying a body, soul, and spirit. See? Here is what God says: “They are no longer two, but you become one flesh” (Matthew 19:6). God's arithmetic is one plus one equals one, okay? But, how are you to be one? You're to be one physically, one psychologically, and one spiritually. All right? There's to be the union of your bodies, because you are a body. There's to be the union of your souls, because you are a soul. And, there's to be the union of your spirit, because you are a spirit.

Now, let me tell you very frankly, Becky, the reason that some people's marriage doesn't last is that they are just one-third married: there's just that union of their bodies. And, while they call it "love," really, it's very little different than animals mating. And, there may be a lot of moonlight, and roses, and romance, and all of that, but when you peel it back, it's just simply animal magnetism.

I. Union of Bodies

Now, I want to say that when you get married, there will be the union of your bodies, and there's nothing impure about that. As a matter of fact, sex is a wonderful gift of God. As you two will come together physically, intimately, sexually, that will be one of God's sweetest gifts to you. And, may I say that the sexual union is not merely—or only, shall I say—for the procreation or the reproduction of the race, that you might have children. You should have children—I hope you will; I hope God will bless you with a nice, fine, large family. "Four!" Now, you folks just butt out. But, let me say that the sexual relationship is more than for procreation.

You know, it's interesting in the Bible—when husband and wife would come together in the marriage act, that the Bible would say that thus and such a person "knew" his wife. Do you remember reading that in the Bible? It says So-and-so "knew" his wife. Well, why would the Bible call the marriage act "knowing" someone? That's very interesting. You see, the marriage act is a form of communication. It's a way of knowing someone. It's a way of saying, "I love you" that cannot be put into words. It's very beautiful and very wonderful.

Now, sometimes we've been taught of to think of sex as dirty or impure. Outside the bonds of matrimony, it is. Inside the bonds of matrimony, it is very pure and very wonderful. And, the Bible says, "*Marriage is honourable...and the bed undefiled: but*"—it also says—"*[adulterers] and [whoremongers] God will judge*" (Hebrews 13:4). So, when the Bible says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*" (Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:27; Matthew 19:18; Romans 13:9), or when the Bible says, "*Flee fornication*" (1 Corinthians 6:18)—it's very important you understand this—God is not trying to keep sex from you; God is keeping sex for you.

Now, in my office back there, I have a picture on the wall. It's an ordinary picture. I suppose it cost maybe 50 or 100 dollars. And, if someone stole it, it would be no great loss—or if it got marred, no great problem. But, if it were a Rembrandt, a Van Gogh, or something like that it would probably be in a vault because it would be so intrinsically valuable. You wouldn't want it marred, or misused, or abused. Now, God puts these high walls around this thing called sex because it is so valuable—not because it's not valuable, but because it is, and God wants to cherish that for you two as His special gift just for you.

Don't get the idea that in your physical relationship, you'll just start in a crescendo of joy. This is something that, if you will keep God's laws concerning the physical relationship, you'll find out that you will increase in joy as you try not simply to receive satisfaction but to give satisfaction and joy to the other person.

And, let me tell you, Justin and Becky: don't be envious of the crowd on the fast track—the Playboy philosophy. Don't be envious of those people. Believe me when I tell you that people who keep God's laws concerning sex enjoy sex more—and probably enjoy more sex—than those who break God's laws. *And, every time God says, "Thou shalt not," He's just saying, "Don't hurt yourself." And, every time God says, "Thou shalt," He's saying, "Help yourself to happiness."* So, there will be the union of your bodies, and that is what I want to call a healthy marriage. I want that for you, okay?

II. Union of Souls

Secondly, there will be the union of your souls. Not only will you come together physically, but you will become one flesh psychologically. Now, that's very important, 'cause Justin, not only should you love her, you ought to like her. Okay? You know, there are a lot of folks who think they are in love, but they get along about like a cobra and a mongoose. Now, you see, we've often heard that phrase, you know, "Can't live with 'em, and can't live without 'em." That ought not to be. There ought to be that oneness of soul where we enjoy one another. You ought not just to be sweethearts, but you're friends. Everybody needs a friend. And, if it's the one you're married to, it's a lot cheaper. You don't have to buy, you know, if you can share the same things and do the same things together. And so, you're going to need to cultivate your friendship, because really, let me tell you, you think you know each other—you really don't, because you're not yet married.

Now, I know what dating is like, and I know that when you're dating, there's so much romance and all of that. And, you want to play huggy bear, and smacking mouth, and all of that. I understand that, but—you just be quiet now, but listen—after you get married, you'll have plenty of time for that; and then, you'll have a lot of time left over, and that's when you're going to get to know one another. And, you see, let me tell you, opposites attract—not only physically are boys attracted to girls and girls attracted to boys, but psychologically, opposites attract. "We've proven that." You've proven that, sure. You see, why do opposites attract? Well, we see in the other person what is missing in us. For example, physically, a man says, "Woman was taken out of me. I'm incomplete without her. That's the reason she's called 'my better half' or 'the other part of me.'" And psychologically, many times, an opposite will attract.

Let me give you an illustration. Sometimes a person who's very fastidious or just can't stand anything that's not in its place will marry a person who's kind of sloppy. Now,

why is that? Well, the sloppy person sees the fastidious person and says, “Boy, I like the way he or she’s got it all together.” And, the very fastidious person may say, “You know, I wish I weren’t such a bother over trifles. I like his (or her) free and easy way.” So, we see in the other person—we think—strengths where we have weaknesses.

Now, we don’t figure it out in our head; it’s very subliminal. Many times an extrovert will marry an introvert. It’s incredible how many times early risers will marry late sleepers, and so forth—true. And, it’s incredible how many times a spendthrift will marry a penny pincher. It’s incredible, but it’s easy to understand why we do that: because in doing that, we are trying to supplement weaknesses that we see in ourselves or affirm strengths we see in our partner. But, remember this: the same thing that caused attraction before marriage will cause friction after marriage. And, if you understand that’s why you got married, you can laugh at it and just accept it.

Getting married is like buying a phonograph record: you buy it because you want what’s on one side, and you just take what comes on the other side. Okay? That’s the same way it is in getting married.

Don’t marry one another if you think you’re going to marry this person to make them over. Just accept the differences, and remember that God put those differences in you to help both of you to grow in patience and to learn from the other and encourage one another.

And, I want to tell you, you will have psychological problems adjusting. I don’t want that to frighten you; I just want you to be forewarned—it could happen. Did you know I’ve been married for longer than you are old? And, my bride is sitting down there, and I love her very much. When I married her, I married a sweet, beautiful, young lady. Now, I’m married to a complicated, beautiful, mature lady. And, she’s still getting adjusted to me, and I’m still getting adjusted to her, because we are changing all the time. So, adjustment goes on all the time. You will never, ever just say, “Okay, that’s finished. We’re adjusted one to another.” You will adjust to one another as long as you live, and it’s going to take a lot of prayer. And sometimes, Justin, in your marriage, you’ll get so close to the wall you won’t even be able to tell what color it is. You will need some help—you will need some help. And, if you need some help, don’t be too proud to come to someone as a counselor, as a friend, okay? Preferably a pastor or a trusted, dedicated Christian, who is full of maturity. As much as your parents love you, it’s probably not wise to take your problems to your parents.

Suppose he were to misuse you and abuse you in some way—speak cruelly to you, maybe even lay a hand on you. God forbid if you do. We’ll whoop you, you understand. But, suppose he did—suppose he did. You went and told your mama, and you knew what you did to provoke it—it wouldn’t be right no matter what you did—but you did know the context out of where that came, for example. And, he might come to you and

say, “Becky, I’m so sorry. I’m so ashamed. Forgive me. I’ll never do it again.” And, you say, “Darling, I forgive you.” And, you bury it, and you forgive it. But, it’ll take mama a long time to forget it. So, sometimes... Now, this is not to say that you won’t share your problems with your parents, and it certainly doesn’t mean that you don’t go to them for advice when it’s needed and when it’s wanted. But, you’re going to have to “leave father and mother, and cleave unto your wife: and you two will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

On the honeymoon things will be pretty good, but after a while, when you get down, there’s so many things you’ve never thought of: vacations, telephone calls, in-laws, gifts at Christmastime, children (how many), what kind of automobile are we going to have, where we’re going to live. All of these things are going to take a lot of adjustment. All right, are you willing to do that? “Yes.” All right. And, remember that opposites attract, and you’re going to discover some things that attracted you that you wouldn’t even have dreamt of later.

III. Union of Spirits

Now thirdly—I want you to listen to this—not only should you be one physically, and not only should you be one psychologically, but the only way you can do that is to be one spiritually. It’s a union of your bodies; it’s a union of your souls—but then, you’re still only two-thirds married. There must be union of your spirits. You see, the Bible says, “*A threefold cord is not [easily] broken*” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Now, how can you have this union of your spirits? Well, let me tell you how. You see, in everybody’s life, there is a throne—the center of control, the control center. I’ll just call it a “throne.” And, by nature, we are full of self, and self wants to be on that throne. All right?

Now, let’s get a fictitious couple. Let’s call him “James,” and her, “Mary.” Okay? Now, James is on the throne of his own life, and Mary’s on the throne of her life. So, King James and Queen Mary decide that they’re going to get married (both of them still on the throne of their life). And so, they get married—a lot of moonlight, and roses, and candles, and all of this. And then, they move into one apartment—two kingdoms under one roof. All right, what did Jesus say? “*A [kingdom] divided against itself [cannot] stand*” (Matthew 12:25). And, sooner or later, there’s going to be war between those two kingdoms. You know what most of our arguments are? Ego against ego, self against self. *There are no problems too big to solve, just people too small to solve them.* Before long, there’s going to be a war between those two kingdoms. It may be a hot war—throwing a frying pan; it may be a cold war—just not speaking. And, after a while, a tragedy comes along called “divorce.” And, how tragic that is—how tragic that is! Divorce is not an option, dear friend, in the Bible. All right, the Bible says, “God hates

divorce”—“hates putting away” (Malachi 2:16). Marriage is a lifetime contract, okay?

Now, what would happen, though, if King James becomes a Christian? In order for him to become a Christian, King James has to step down from the throne of his life and enthrone King Jesus. Queen Mary, if she becomes a Christian, she steps down off the throne of her life and enthrones King Jesus. Now, how many kingdoms are there? Just one kingdom—because Jesus rules both thrones. Here’s a wonderful secret: the Jesus in James is not going to fight the Jesus in Mary, and the Jesus in Mary is not going to fight the Jesus in James.

You two, if Christ is on the throne of both lives, are going to be one spiritually. You’re going to be able to pray together and worship together. Let me ask you a question, Justin. And, forget these folks are here; I ask it from my heart: Are you saved? Is Christ the Lord of your life? “Yes, I am, and He is.” Praise the Lord. Becky, with all of your heart and soul, are you trusting Jesus Christ? “Yes, sir.” You’ve stepped down from the throne of your life and enthroned Him, right? All right. Now look—watch what’s going to happen: because you are one spiritually, it’s so much easier to be one psychologically, okay? Because, where is the problem psychologically? Why can’t we heal our arguments? Because of rotten ego. But, when we take self off the throne and enthrone Christ, then we can solve those problems. And, when we’re one spiritually, then we can become one psychologically. Now, watch this: when we’re one psychologically, it’s so much easier to be physically, because you can’t be arguing one moment and having romance the next, you see; it’s all tied together. And, what a lot of people don’t realize is that their relationship to God in Heaven is linked to their relationship to one another—even physically, in the physical act of marriage.

Conclusion

Now, you’ve heard me preach, and you both know the Lord Jesus Christ. Justin, because of your spiritual relationship, the Bible says you are the head of the home. Have you read Ephesians 5 as to what the husband is to be? “Yes.” Do you know that you’re to love Becky as Christ loved the Church and He died for the Church? “Yes, sir.” Are you willing to die for her? “Yes, I am.” Are you willing to die to yourself then? “Yes.” Are you willing to put her first and live for her sacrificially? Are you? “Yes.”

Becky, Jesus says that *“as the church is subject [to] Christ...wives [ought to] be to their own husbands in every thing”* (Ephesians 5:24). Are you willing to react to your husband even as if he is Jesus Christ and be in submission to him—to pray for him and to do him good and not evil all the days of your life? “Yes, sir.” That’s so wonderful—that’s so wonderful.

Now listen, it’s not going to be easy, but it’s going to be worth it. You’re going to see a lot of other kids—they’re doing things that you can’t do. Well, really, you wouldn’t want

to do it. They're going to be boozing around, sleeping around; they're not going to be in church, and you're going to say, "Hey, everything's passing us by." Don't worry about them. Commit your life to Jesus, to one another, to His Church; be faithful, and I'll promise you, when you get to be an old coot like me, you'll look back, and you'll say, "It's worth it—truly worth it." God bless you both.

Let me pray for you. Father, I know the church joins me as we pray for this precious, precious couple. Lord, may their home be a testimony of Your grace and Your love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Logic of the Gospel

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 18, 1989

Main Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23

Outline

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Introduction

First Thessalonians chapter 5, and we're going to read together verses 23 and 24. In just a moment, tonight, I want to speak to you on this subject: “The Logic of the Gospel.” Now I've been studying the Bible seriously for 40 years. And there are four things—four truths—that have, in a way, unlocked the rest of the Bible for me. I have just put things together to help me understand things logically. I have put things together to synthesize and coordinate in my own heart and mind the entire Bible. I'm going to mention all four of them, and I want to speak to you about one of them, tonight.

Of the four things that have really helped me to understand the Bible is, first of all, finding Christ in the Old Testament. It is understanding that the Old Testament is not about the nation Israel. It is about Jesus Christ. Now learn that. Jesus told the Jews of His day, “*Search the scriptures...and they are they which testify of me*” (John 5:39). And the Bible has become a new book to me, as I look in the Old Testament to find pictures, types, illustrations, and prophecies of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus is the hero of the Bible. If you read the Bible and you don't find Jesus, you'd better re-read it.

Standing somewhere in the shadows you'll find Jesus. That's one of the things—one of the secrets—that have helped me in my understanding of the Bible.

The other thing is the premillennial return of Christ. Now I am unabashedly, unashamedly a premillennialist. I believe that Jesus Christ is coming at any moment. And I believe the Lord Jesus is going to rule and reign here on earth a thousand blessed years, called the millennium. And so therefore, when I read these Old Testament prophecies, and all of these things that the Old Testament says is going to happen, and the New Testament says is going to happen, I don't have to try to explain them away. They make sense. So many prophecies that would never be fulfilled, never be integrated and coordinated in the Bible, make sense to me, because I believe in the premillennial return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now the third thing that has helped me to understand the Bible, and has given me a sort of insight into the Bible, is the fact that what happened to the children of Israel in the Old Testament is an example to us in the New Testament. The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 11, *"Now all these things happened unto them for examples"* (1 Corinthians 10:11) to us; and so, therefore, we don't have mere history. When we read the Old Testament, we have devotional literature. I can pick up the wilderness wanderings, and all of the things that happened to the Jews, Brother Jim, and all of the things—their faults, their foibles, their successes, their victories, and all of these things—and I can say, "Hey, that's an example for me. That's an example for me. That's an example for me." It happened to them for examples to us. Therefore, it's not just dry history. It becomes devotional literature, instructional literature. That's the third thing that's helped me to understand the Scriptures.

Now the fourth one is the one I want to talk to you about, tonight, and that is this: that man, by nature, is trichotomous. You say, "Huh, by nature man is trichotomous?" That is, there are three parts to man's nature. Now folks, I was preaching for a long time before I understood this. If you've heard me preach before, you've heard me mention this. But if you're a newcomer to Bellevue, you need to tune in and listen to what the Scripture has to say. Now look at this scripture tonight that we have before us—1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 23: *"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;"*—now, it's not holy, but wholly, which means completely. That is, all there is of you—*"and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it"* (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). You, my dear friend, are spirit, soul, and body.

Now I want to say that I was pastoring before I truly understood that man has a trichotomous nature. I knew that man had a body. And I knew that he had a soul, or a spirit, and I used to think that the soul and the spirit were an interchange—"six of one, half a dozen of another." And it took me a while to understand that there is a vital

distinction between soul and spirit, that man has body, soul, and spirit. That is, that man is a triune being, made in the image of a triune God.

You know, the Bible says, in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 26, *“And God said, Let us...”*—who is He speaking with? There was no one else there, but God said—*“Let us make man in our image”* (Genesis 1:26). Well, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were talking together: the triune God. God said, *“Let us make man in our image”* (Genesis 1:26) And God is a triune being, and God made man a triune being. We find the trinity of God in all of the Bible, and I’ll not even begin to attempt to prove to you the Trinity, or the trinity of God.

But I’ll give you just two scriptures, tonight, to point out what I’m talking about. And I’ve selected these more or less at random, because there are so many. In 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 14, the Apostle Paul is giving a benediction, and he says, *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy [Spirit]”*—or the Holy Ghost—*“be with you all. Amen”* (2 Corinthians 13:14). So there he mentions the three persons in the Godhead. The other very well-known verse that I’ll use tonight just to illustrate the trinity of God is Matthew chapter 28 and verse 19 and 20: *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]”* (Matthew 28:19). Not “the names,” but “the name”—“the name.” You see, one God: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We don’t worship three Gods; we worship one God, who has revealed Himself, and shown Himself to be three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You say, “Well, that’s confusing.” Well, dear friend, explain it, you’ll lose your mind; deny it, you’ll lose your soul. It’s here. And God is a triune God. You can’t explain it. You just simply accept it.

Now when God created man in His image, He created man spirit, soul, and body. And when man is redeemed, he is redeemed spirit, soul, and body. That’s what the Apostle Paul is talking about, here, when he says, *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;”—*that is, “save you completely.” He’s not going to save you one third or two thirds, He’s going to save all of you—*“and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Now some people have the idea that our spirit’s going to be saved, but our body is going to perish. Or, maybe it’s the soul that’s saved, and the spirit doesn’t go to Heaven. Or, perhaps it’s the spirit and the soul, but not the body. But my dear friend, God created you spirit, soul, and body. And when you’re redeemed, you’re going to be redeemed, spirit, soul, and body. Not one will the devil get. He’ll never be able to taunt our Lord, and say, “Well, you’ve got his spirit, but I got his body.” Oh, we are going to be redeemed, we’re going to be sanctified—saved wholly—and blameless at the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now having said all of that, I want to talk to you about the difference between spirit, soul, and body. And then, I want to draw some conclusions that I'm going to call the logic of the gospel. It'll help you to understand what God does, when He saves us, and it'll just help you to know what God is up to. Because, dear friend, you need to understand the nature of human nature, and it'll prepare you to die, and to live for all eternity.

I. The Difference between Spirit, Soul, and Body

A. The Spirit

All right now, first of all, let's talk about the word *spirit*. Look at the word *spirit*. When you see the word *spirit* in the Bible, it can mean many things. For example, it could be speaking of the Holy Spirit. In this verse, it is not speaking of the Holy Spirit. It could be speaking of an angel spirit. Angels are called ministering spirits. But it's not speaking of an angry spirit. It could be. It could be speaking of a demon spirit. Demons are called spirits—evil spirits. But it also has the reference to a part of man's nature, called man's spirit, or the spirit of man.

Now the spirit in you is that quality in you that makes you different from an animal. Animals have a soul, but animals do not have a spirit. The spirit is that distinguishing handiwork of God in you that makes you different from a plant, a vegetable, a turnip, or from a toad. You have a spirit, and therefore, you are in the image of God, because God is a spirit. Now therefore, it's your spirit that is the seat of God-consciousness. We're going to look at a lot of scriptures. Just get your Bible out, and lick your fingers. I'll look them up with you.

First Corinthians chapter 2, and begin with me in verse 9: *"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen,"*—that is, you're not going to understand this through the eye gate—*"nor ear heard,"*—you're not going to get it through the ear gate—*"neither have entered into the heart of man,"*—you're not going to learn it by emotion—*"the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."*

Well, dear friend, if you can't read it, if you can't hear it, and if you can't feel it, how are you going to understand it? Well, verse 10: *"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit"*—that is, the Holy Spirit—*"searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."* And then, continue to read, as he asks this question: *"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?"* Now what does that mean? It means, down in your deepest being there are things that you and you alone know. There are things about me that I know that Joyce doesn't know. There are things about me that you don't know. No one knows, but me. Who knows the things of a spirit of man? Who knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him? *"Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."* You see, just as my

spirit knows those deep things about me, the Holy Spirit knows those deep things about God. So far, so good. We understand that. There are certain things about me that you'll never know; only I can know. Certain things about God, that normally you would never know, only the Spirit of God could know. But now, watch verse 12: *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world,"*—what is the spirit of the world? The spirit of antichrist, the spirit of the devil—*"but the spirit which is of God;"*—that is, the Holy Spirit—*"that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."*

Now how do we know spiritual things? Well, the Holy Spirit of God comes into our human spirit. Now remember only God's spirit knows the things of God. But when we get saved, we are made partakers of the divine nature, and the very Spirit of God, that knows the deep things of God, now lives in us, to teach us things that eye cannot see, ear cannot hear, heart cannot imagine, but the Spirit of God teaches us. It is the Holy Spirit in the human spirit that is the organ of spiritual knowledge.

Now notice verse 13: *"Which things also we speak,"*—that's what the Apostle Paul's preaching came from—*"not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth,"*—not something you can learn out of a book—*"but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man..."*—you see the word *natural man*? That's the word *psuchikos*, or *soulish man*—the unsaved man, the man without God, the man in his natural state—*"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Corinthians 2:9–14)—or spiritually understood.

Now you see, when God created Adam in the Garden of Eden, God made Adam perfect. Now he was perfect in his spirit, perfect in his soul, and perfect in his body. And in Adam's spirit, God dwelt. And God lived in Adam's spirit. And God was to Adam, in his spirit, what instinct was to the rest of the animals. Adam didn't have instinct. He had something better. He had God to guide him, and to teach him. And the Bible says, he walked with God.

Now God is a spirit and Adam was a man. How could he walk with God? God was inside of him. God was in his spirit. He just walked with God, and God was there with Adam in the garden. But God had told Adam, "Adam, if you disobey me, the day that you disobey me you will surely die" (Genesis 2:16–17). Well, Adam did disobey God. He ate of the forbidden fruit, and he died that day. But how did he die? He didn't die physically. He didn't die emotionally. He died spiritually. What is death in the Bible? It is not the separation of the soul from the body. It is the separation of the spirit from God. And when Adam died, God moved out of Adam's spirit. And God was to the spirit what blood is to the body.

Now the life of the flesh is the blood, the life of the spirit is God. And when God

moved out of Adam, Adam died spiritually. You see, the Bible says, concerning our Lord, *“In him was life; and the life was the light of men”* (John 1:4). And so when the Lord went out, the life went out. And when the life went out, the light went out. The Lord went out, the life went out. When the life went out, the light went out. Because now, man, who used to have the Lord, he no longer has the Lord; so he’s depraved. Man, who used to have the life, no longer has the life; so now, he’s dead. Man, who used to have the light, no longer has the light; so now, he’s darkened. And rather than having the Lord, the life, and the light, he has depravity, death, and darkness. He is minus God in his spirit.

And God just simply moved out of Adam. That’s what death was. It was the separation of the spirit from God. And now rather than being a spiritual man, Adam is now a natural man—a soulish man—as we’re going to see. And the natural man, without regeneration, he cannot know the things of God. In verse 14: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). There are certain things that an unsaved man will never know until the Holy Spirit turns the light on in his soul. And what a warning this ought to be, as we deal with people, especially in churches.

Let me show you an interesting verse. Turn with me to Matthew chapter 7, and look with me, in verse 6. Jesus gives a warning that all Christians and pastors and church leaders would do well to heed. In Matthew chapter 7 and verse 6, our Lord says this: *“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you”* (Matthew 7:6). Now what does that mean? It means, dear friend, that a natural man has no more appreciation for spiritual things than a hog would for a pearl necklace. That’s exactly what it means. Don’t cast your pearls before swine. Don’t allow natural people to handle spiritual things, the pearls of the kingdom. If you do, it’s a way, not to run a church, but to ruin a church.

And so many times, a pastor will see some guy in the congregation. He’s witty, charming, and brilliant. He knows how to make money. He’s a wheeler, dealer, shaker, and a mover. And he’ll say, “Let’s make a deacon out of him.” But my dear friend, he’s a natural man. He’s never been saved. He doesn’t know the things of the Spirit of God. And that worldly deacon, who has power to quote “help the church,” has that same soulish power to hurt the church, and to hinder the church.

Now the Holy Spirit in the human spirit is the way we’re to get guidance. We know, naturally, in our spirits, the things that are of God. The Holy Spirit of God teaches us these things. I want to give you some scriptures, just to show you, some other scriptures that teach you what the Holy Spirit does. Look, for example, in Job chapter 32 and verse 8—I’m talking about the Holy Spirit in the human spirit—Job chapter 32 and verse

8: *“But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding”* (Job 32:8). That is, you know God in the spirit. Numbers chapter 16 and verse 22—just jot this one down—there He’s called *“O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh”* (Numbers 16:22). In Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 9, He’s called *“the Father of spirits”* (Hebrews 12:9). In John chapter 4 and verse 24, the Bible says, *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). In Romans chapter 1 and verse 9, Paul speaks of God *“whom I serve with my spirit”* (Romans 1:9). And then, chapter 8, and verse 16, is a wonderful verse. I’ll let you turn to that one, because it’s one worth marking and noting. Romans chapter 8 and verse 16 says, *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”* (Romans 8:16).

So let’s talk about the human spirit, one more time. What is the human spirit? The human spirit is that organ of spiritual knowledge. It is that place where we know God. We know God with our spirits. We understand with our spirits. And if you’re not born again, you have no understanding. And Jesus told Nicodemus, *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see”* (John 3:3). That’s your spirit.

B. The Soul

Now what about your soul? What about your soul? Remember what our text said—1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 23: *“And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23)—spirit, soul, and body. What about your soul? What is the difference between the soul and the spirit? While both the soul and the spirit are invisible and intangible, both the soul and the spirit are inseparable, but they are not identical. There is a difference between soul and spirit. And I can prove that very clearly by quoting to you Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 12: *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit”* (Hebrews 4:12).

Now what is the soul? The soul is the psychological part of your nature. Your soul is yourself—your ego, your likes, your dislikes, your personality, your sense of humor, and your intelligence. It is all of those things put together that make you a unique individual. The Greek word for soul is *psuche*. It’s the word we get psychiatry from. And it’s a word that speaks of the inner man. The *soul*, we would call it.

The soul is primarily a mind, emotion, and will. Let me give you several verses that point that out, where I can show you that the soul is primarily mind, emotion, and will. For example, Proverbs chapter 24 and verse 14, he speaks of the knowledge of wisdom to the soul: *“So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul”* (Proverbs 24:14). That is, with the soul, you have the knowledge of wisdom. Now you learn with your soul, but you know with your spirit. The soul is the mind. You learn with your soul. All right? You

feel with your soul, you have emotion. First Samuel chapter 18 and verse 1 says, *“that the soul of Jonathan was knit”*—or tied, or intertwined—*“with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul”* (1 Samuel 18:1). So in their souls, they had a fellowship; they were knit together.

So the mind is a part of the soul, the emotion is part of the soul, and the will is part of the soul. In Job chapter 6 and verse 7, Job spoke of *“the things that my soul refused to touch”* (Job 6:7), or hates. That is, his soul had made a decision: “I will not touch that.” So I just mentioned three verses—and I could mention many more—to tell you that your soul is mind, emotion, and will. Put those together, and you have the sum total of your personality: your mind, your emotion, and your will.

Now I said that Adam sinned against God. And when Adam sinned against God, the Lord went out. And when the Lord went out, the life went out. And when the life went out, the light went out. All right now, the spirit, now, is dead. God was to the spirit what blood is to the body. And that life of God went out of Adam.

All right now, how is Adam supposed to operate? How was any man supposed to operate? God the Holy Spirit is to be speaking to the human spirit. The human spirit is to know the things of God intuitively. And then, the human spirit speaks to the soul: the mind, the emotion, and the will. The mind, the emotion, and the will speak to the body: the eyes, the ears, the hands, the feet. And the body goes out into this world, and expresses the life of God. The Holy Spirit in the human spirit, to the human soul, through the body, out into the world—and the life of God is being expressed. As He inhabits my humanity, He shows His deity. And that’s the way we’re supposed to live. That’s the way we’re supposed to operate: in direct contact with headquarters.

But what happened? When Adam sinned, and he died spiritually, who was next? What was next in the chain of command? The soul is next in the chain of command. And now Adam is no longer a spiritual man; he is now a soulish man, or a natural man. And how does a soulish man operate? The spirit is dead; and so, the vice-president takes over. The soul takes over. And the soul says, “I am in charge, now.” Remember Alexander Haig? The soul says, “I am in charge now! Listen to me!” I’d almost forgotten about Haig.

And how does a soulish man operate? You ought to know. The city of Memphis is full of them. Most of the people you’ll meet tomorrow are soulish people, and here’s how they operate. Remember, we said, the soul is what? Mind, emotion, and will. His mind says, “I think I ought to do thus and such.” His emotion says, “I feel like doing it.” His will says, “Okay, I’ll do it.” That’s the way a soulish man operates. He’s not in contact with God. He moves. He’s his own motivator. He’s his own mover. He does that which is right in his own eyes.

Now he may be a very religious person. As a matter of fact, the devil doesn’t care if

he goes to church. As a matter of fact, the devil will encourage him to go to church. He'll be a better advertisement for the devil if he is in a soulish church than if he is in the gutter, covered with flies and vomit. And so the devil will put him in a church, perhaps, that has beautiful architecture. It has very wonderful music. It will arouse his emotion. And a soulish man can come to church, like that, and he can enjoy it. He can say, "Man, that's good music. Man, that is good." That is, "They're right on pitch, good rhythm. That moved me." And he can hear a man speak, and he can say, "Hey, you know, I like to hear him speak. Boy, he's a good speaker." And the church says, "Hey, we're building a new building." Say, "Boy, that is a beautiful building. I like that." "We raised our budget." He said, "Boy, that's good business." "Look there; look at that bottom line." That all just appeals to him. He likes it. He has a good time. I mean, he's right in there with everybody else. But he's not saved. He's not saved at all. He has no relationship to God. He doesn't know God. But his soul is enjoying those trappings. And the devil is glad to give him a counterfeit conversion, that leads to a synthetic salvation, that leads to a devil's hell. He's never, ever been saved. And he cannot know God, until he's born from above, until he has an experience with God called *the new birth*.

Now the soul is not bad. The soul is good. The body is not bad. The body is good. But if the body takes precedence over the soul, you're really in trouble. And there are some people like that, whose body is dictating even what they think and say. That's the lowest form of depravity. But if the soul is dictating over the things of the spirit, and the spirit is dead, that's a terrible thing. But when a man gets saved, then that soul becomes subject to the spirit, as God has intended, and then the soul is fine. When you get saved, you don't check your mind, emotion, and will at the door. You're to serve God with your mind. You're to serve God with your emotion. You're to serve God with your will. But all of that has to be subject to the spirit. Do you understand that? And so rightly understood, the mind, emotion, and will—they all have their place. As a matter of fact, when you get saved, your soul joins your spirit in worshipping the Lord.

Now Mary said it, in Luke chapter 1 and verses 46 and 47—she said, "*My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*" (Luke 1:46–47). Psalm chapter 103 and verse 1: "*Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name*" (Psalm 103:1). There's nothing wrong with soul in music. There's nothing wrong with soul in preaching. There's nothing wrong with soul in living. God made you a soul. You're to love him with all of your soul. But your soul—your mind, your emotion, and your will—must ever be subject to the spirit. If it's not, you've got real trouble. Now that's your soul: your mind, emotion, and will.

C. **The Body**

Now what about your body? Well, the body is the easiest to understand. In 1

Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 1, the Bible calls our body, “*our earthly house*” (2 Corinthians 5:1). Romans chapter 12 and verses 1 and 2: “*that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice*” (Romans 12:1). Never get the idea that the body is evil. When the Bible speaks of the flesh, it’s not talking about the body; it’s talking about the old Adamic nature that’s crucified with Christ. But your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. First Corinthians chapter 6 verse 19 and 20: “*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s*” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). And so you’re to glorify God in your body. Your body is a temple of God. It is our earthly house, however. It’s what we live in so we can express the life of God. You can’t see my spirit. You can’t see my soul. The only way you know anything of my spirit or my soul is my body, right now. You’re seeing me, hearing me, watching me; and, it is through my body that I’m expressing the invisible spirit and the invisible soul, inseparable spirit and inseparable soul, that are in me. So my body is to be presented to Him a living sacrifice. You’re to take care of your body.

They asked a man who was 98-years-old, they said, “You’re 98?” They said, “As you look back on life, what do you think?” He said, “Well, if I’d have known I was going to live this long, I’d have taken better care of my body.” We ought to take care of our bodies. Dear friend, how foolish it is to pamper the body, and not to take care of the soul and the spirit.

Now that’s who we are. That’s how God made us: body, soul, and spirit. And with our bodies, we have physical life—we know the world beneath us. With our souls, we have psychological life—we know the world around us, and within us. And with our spirits, we have spiritual life—we know the world above us. When our bodies are right, we’re healthy. When our souls are right, we’re happy. When our spirits are right, we’re holy. That’s the way God made a man to be. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul looked forward to that time when we will be made back like Adam was when he was created: “*I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it*” (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). When God redeems you, He is redeeming your spirit, soul, and body.

II. The Logic of the Gospel

Now having said all of that, let me just give you now three or four conclusions that I call the logic of the Gospel, that just help you to understand what God is up to. And how it all fits together, knowing who we are, and what we are.

A. What Is Death?

First of all, I want you to think, one more time, about what death is. Every now and then, we say, “So-and-so died a natural death.” There is no such thing as a natural death. All death is unnatural. God didn’t plan it. It’s something that happened, as a result of sin. It is not what God planned.

1. Physical Death

But you see, when you talk about death, you might talk, first of all, about physical death. Physical death is when the soul and the spirit leave the body. That’s spoken of, in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 27: *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die”* (Hebrews 9:27). That’s going to happen to me, and you, and everybody else, unless Jesus comes first. We have an appointment with death. Okay? That’s physical death.

2. Spiritual Death

Now there’s spiritual death, and that’s the separation of the soul and the spirit from God. Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 1: *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 2:1). Now there are a lot of people who haven’t died physically, who are dead spiritually. They’re *“dead in trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 1:1). The Bible says, *“But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth”* (1 Timothy 5:6). And so there are a lot of zombies who’ll go to work, tomorrow. And they’re spiritually dead.

3. Eternal Death

But eternal death is the separation of the soul and the spirit from God, eternally in Hell. Revelation chapter 21 and verse 8 says, *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”* (Revelation 21:8). The second death—that’s the eternal death, the lake of fire and brimstone.

Physical death is the separation of the spirit and the soul from the body. Spiritual death is the separation of the spirit and soul from God. Eternal death is the separation of the spirit and soul from God in eternity, never to be changed. Now that’s what it means to be spiritually dead.

B. What Is Salvation?

Now we have to understand what it means to be saved, because to be saved means to receive spiritual life. *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 2:1). The word *quicken* means, “made alive.” What is salvation? Salvation is not some sort of exercise that God has engineered to get man out of earth and into Heaven. That’s only the byproduct of salvation. *What is salvation? It is not primarily getting man out of earth and into Heaven. It is getting God out of Heaven*

into man. That's what salvation is. It is just getting God right back in there. Now you see, what happened, when Adam sinned, is that God moved out. And he became minus God. The Lord, the life, the light, went out. Depravity, death, and darkness came in.

Now when I get saved, I receive the Lord. And when I receive the Lord, I receive the life. And when I receive the life, I receive the light. And so salvation is getting God back into man. The Bible calls this being "*partakers of the divine nature*" (2 Peter 1:4). We, again, get God back where He wants to be, and where He needs to be. You—man—need more than forgiveness. Getting your sins forgiven is not salvation—that's only the precursor for salvation. Going to Heaven is not salvation—that's only the result of salvation. Salvation is receiving a new nature. It is getting God back in, so that the Holy Spirit in the human spirit can, one more time, make you a whole man, and you can know the things that are freely given of God. That's the reason that *a Christian is not just somebody that has a creed, a code, a cause, or a church. He's somebody that has Christ.* He has been made a "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). You understand what death is, and then you understand what life is. Jesus said, "*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10). That, my dear friend, is the nature of salvation. And now once you understand what death is, and you turn from death, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ, you understand what life is.

Now you begin to understand the conflict that you felt, when you got saved. Remember, when you first got saved, you thought you'd never sin again? Remember, when you first got saved, you said, "This is wonderful; this is thrilling; this is glorious." Then, after a while, you said, "This is difficult." Then, after a while, you said, "This is impossible." But you remember, at first, how easy it seemed to be. And then, all of a sudden, bang! You came up against those temptations. You came up against the devil. You came up against something warring inside of you.

There's a war that goes on inside of you. And the Bible says, "*For the flesh*"—talking about the old nature—"*lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other*" (Galatians 5:17). You feel that internal war within you. Have you ever felt it? Just nod your head. The devil will say that's a sign you're not saved. He's a liar—that's a sign you are saved. It's a sign you are saved, because what has happened, this whole time when you were lost, was that old man, that nature, that soulish man, that *psuchikos* man, that soulish man, that natural man, was having his way. Mind, emotion, and will were doing whatever mind, emotion, and will wanted to do. Then, in comes the Holy Spirit of God into this new person, and you're born again in the spirit, and God's Spirit is in your spirit.

But who's been the boss? Who's been the tyrant? Who's been in charge? The soul has been! The spirit says, "Let's go to prayer meeting." The soul says, "Let's go to a

movie show.” The spirit says, “Let’s pray.” The soul says, “Let’s sleep.” And you find a battle going on. And that soul, that old nature that’s there, untrained and untamed, doesn’t want to subject itself to the spirit.

And when the soul has predominance, you are what the Bible calls a carnal man. But when the spirit has predominance, you’re what the Bible calls a spiritual man. To be Spirit-filled just simply means, not that your soul is dead, but your soul is in subjection to the Holy Spirit, in the human spirit. That’s what it means. Your mind, your emotion, and your will are now lined up with His Word, His way, and His plan for your life. And you’re now Spirit-filled. And so what we need to do is just simply learn by choice to say, “no” to the soulish desires, the carnal desires, and say, “yes” to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so that’s the key to victory.

Now you can also understand why God’s not yet finished with us. Now Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6 says, *“that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Philippians 1:6). You see, when Adam died, he died immediately in his spirit, and he died progressively in his soul. The Bible literally says, “dying thou shalt die” (Genesis 2:17), and his soul became like a garden of weeds. His mind, his emotion, and his will progressively became corrupted. He died immediately in his spirit. He died progressively in his soul. He died ultimately in his body. His body died as a result of that sin, way back there. It took hundreds of years, but ultimately his body died, because sin entered in.

Now when a man gets saved, God reverses the process. Adam died immediately in his spirit, progressively in his soul, and ultimately in his body. When God saves a man now, that man is justified immediately in his spirit, sanctified progressively in his soul, and glorified ultimately in his body. You see, God’s not finished with us yet. You say, “Well, Adrian, you don’t look so saved.” Just wait. Just wait. He’s not finished. Paul said, *“And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24).

Conclusion

I’m telling you, my dear friend, that God made you spirit, soul, and body. And He has redeemed you—spirit, soul, and body. You’ve been justified in your spirit. You’re being sanctified in your soul. And bless God, one day, you’ll be glorified in your body. And the Psalmist said, *“I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness”* (Psalm 17:15). And so will I.

My friend, that’s the logic of the gospel. You understand that! You understand that! That God has made you a triune being. And so much of the Bible will just come together in your heart and mind.