

“GLAD WORDS FOR SAD DAYS”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

We have a Christian duty to comfort and encourage one another. A glad word during sad times has kept many a person on their feet who otherwise might have succumbed to sorrow. Blessed are the persons who speak such words.

Our words seem so inadequate, so incomplete and yet we do our best to express our sympathy and our concern to those left behind. I am reminded again that what we need at a time like this are divine words - divine revelation, not just mere human rhetoric.

- We need words that speak of certainties, not speculation;
- We need words that speak with authority;
- We need words that provide true comfort;
- We need words that give hope and help, something and someone to believe in as we go on from here.

And God has not left us without such words for times like this. He has spoken clearly, concisely and with authority. Let us look at what God's Word promises the person who dies in the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

There are at least 3 promises in these verses:

I. The Bible Promises Believer's a Reception in Glory.

The Apostle Paul was writing to these believers to instruct them about those who had died. The term *"fall asleep"* refers to those who had died. Paul does not want those left behind to sorrow as those who have no hope.

The reason they don't have to sorrow as others without hope is given in verse 14 – *“we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.”*

Those who have died in the Lord are with Christ. Other Scriptures teach us the same thing:

- II Corinthians 5 tells us that when we Christians die, we go immediately to be with the Lord – to be *"absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."* (v.8)
- Philippians 1:23 tells us when we depart from this life, we are *"with Christ."*

Therefore, when Christians sorrow over the departure of a loved one, it is we do not sorrow as others who have no hope because of the promises of God. Not only does the Bible promise the Christian an immediate reception in glory but . . .

II. The Bible Promises the Believer a Resurrection of the Body.

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.” (1 Thess. 4:15-16)

These verses teach us that those bodies of Christians that are sleeping in the graves will one day come forth, raised when Christ comes back. In vs. 16 we see that the souls of the believers (who are now with Christ) will be reunited with their resurrected bodies at Jesus' coming for His church.

And that body will be a body described in Rev. 21:3-4 as:

- free from pain
- free from sorrow, crying, tears
- free from sin
- free from death

The Christian's soul goes immediately to the presence of the Lord. The Christian's body rests in the grave until the day the Lord comes back for His church when it will be resurrected into a glorious body and be reunited with the soul.

We need not sorrow as others who have no hope for the Christian is promised:

- an immediate reception in glory; and
- a resurrection of his body.

But there is more, for not only does the Christian who dies have the certainty of an immediate reception in glory and a resurrection of his body but . . .

III. The Bible Promises a Reunion With Loved Ones.

“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thess. 4:17)

The reunion is actually two-fold:

A. First, there will be a reunion with loved ones.

The Lord may come back today and if He does the believers who are alive will be reunited with our Christian loved ones in God's presence. Our separation is not permanent!

B. Second, there will be a reunion with Christ.

One day the Lord will come back and Christians who are alive will be caught up to join the resurrected bodies of those who have died. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." The Christian who dies has the promise:

- Of an immediate reception into the Lord's presence;
- Of a resurrected body;
- Of reunion with loved ones when the Lord returns.

It is no wonder that Paul says, "wherefore comfort one another with these words" for indeed these are glad words for sad days!

Those of us who are left behind for the time being can be comforted in knowing and relying upon the certainties of God's words, His Divine revelation.

Conclusion

1. But we should not forget that these promises are *conditioned on faith* in Christ as Savior who died as our substitute on Calvary and rose again: "we believe that Jesus died and rose again." (I Thess. 4:14)
2. The reality of death should make us stop and ask whether we could claim these promises if we were to die.
3. If you are not sure where you will spend eternity I invite you to ask Jesus Christ to be your Savior. He died on the cross for our sins, was buried and then arose from the dead. Trusting Him as your Savior will turn a sad time into a glad eternity.

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

I Thess. 4:18

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