

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; "Our Hope and Comfort" June 18, 2023

I. Welcome

A. Good morning and Happy Father's Day! Welcome to Calvary Chapel Iwakuni, it's great to be here with you all.

1. *Welcome any new faces and those streaming online.*

B. Before we continue any further, let's go ahead and dismiss our elementary aged children to their Sunday School classrooms.

1. As well as the bible English class (Second Service)

C. As they make their way out, will the rest of you please open up your Bible and make your way to chapter 4 of the book of 1 Thessalonians?

1. Last week we paused our verse by verse study through the book of 1 Thessalonians as we welcomed a guest speaker with us, Kevin Johnson from the Free Burma Rangers.

2. But today, we turn back to our study picking up where we left off two weeks ago.

a. Two weeks ago, we covered the first part of chapter four that dealt with having a walk that was pleasing to the Lord.

b. And Paul highlighted two ways in which we can have a walk that is pleasing to the Lord. One way was through walking in holiness, the other was through walking in love.

i. As believers we are called to be holy, to be set apart for the Lord and the things of the Lord. Paul specifically highlighted our moral purity and our need to abstain from sexual immorality in vs. 3-8.

ii. Also, as believers, we are called to love. The church in Thessalonica loved one another in the church, but Paul instructed them to love not just those in the church, but those outside the church;

to walk in love towards those outside the faith in vs. 9-12.

c. When our walk, our lives in Christ, are characterized by love and holiness, we are living as Christ would have us to and we are going to have a walk that is pleasing to the Lord.

3. Today, we're going to cover the rest of chapter 4. Last week we covered verses 1-12, this week we will finish off the chapter by covering verses 13-18.

4. So, if you are there in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, I'd like to ask you to rise to your feet in honor of God and His Holy Word. I'm going to read through our text in my Bible, do your best to follow along in your own.

5. Paul continues his letter with the following in verse 13... (R & P).

II. Intro;

A. Our text this morning deals with a sensitive topic; the death of loved ones and how their death fits in with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. We've already noted in our study of this book that the main theme deals with and revolves around the return of Christ. Paul makes mention of the return of Christ at the end of each chapter and even starts off chapter 5 going into more details about the return of Christ.

2. The church in Thessalonica had been taught that Christ would return and that they should anticipate His return and the events that will transpire at His return.

3. And it would seem that they were doing so. But something had popped up that they were not anticipating, something they didn't quite understand or comprehend. While they were eagerly awaiting Christ's return, some of their friends, family, and other loved ones had died.

4. And it would seem based upon what we read here in Paul's letter that there was a concern amongst the church that their deceased loved ones had missed out on the glorious promises and blessings that would be associated with the return of Christ.

5. And it started to stir within them some questions: "What would happen to those who died while waiting for Christ's return?", "Would they miss out on the glorious promises of the resurrection?", "Would they miss out on partaking in the joy of being in the presence of Christ in heaven for all of eternity?", "What would become of them?".

B. In our text this morning, Paul sets out to answer these questions they had by reminding the church in Thessalonica of the hope and comfort we have in Christ.

1. The title of our study this morning is going to be "**Our Hope and Comfort**".

2. And as we go through our text, I'm going to highlight five things that our hope and comfort are based upon and we'll make some application points along the way as well.

3. So, let's dive in and see what Paul had to say about this sensitive topic regarding the death of loved ones in Christ. Read our opening verse, verse 13 once again with me.

III. 1 Thessalonians 2:13; What Paul Doesn't Want

A. In diving into this sensitive topic, Paul starts off speaking about what he doesn't want for the church in Thessalonica. There are two things he doesn't want for them.

1. Number 1, we see that Paul didn't want the church in Thessalonica to be ignorant concerning those who had fallen asleep.

- a. Now when Paul uses the phrase, “fallen asleep” he is referring to those who have passed away, those who have died.
 - i. This was a common euphemism used by Jews to speak about the death of someone back in that day.
- b. So, we understand that what Paul is saying is that he doesn’t want the church to be ignorant about those who have passed away, those who have died. And specifically, as we see at the end of verse 14, Paul is referencing those who have fallen asleep, or died, in Jesus.
- c. So this is speaking about the death of a believer. Someone who was in Christ and had been waiting for Christ, but passed away prior to Christ’s return.
- d. Paul didn’t want the church to be ignorant, or your translation may read “uninformed”. The Greek word used here is “agnoeo” which is where we get our English word agnostic from. It simply means without knowledge.
- e. Now this was a favorite saying of Paul’s. He used it or something similar to it, on several different occasions to mention things to the various churches that he didn’t want them to be uninformed upon, or ignorant of, or without knowledge of.
 - i. In Romans Paul wrote about God’s plan for the nation of Israel and their salvation as it pertains to the fullness of the Gentiles. He wrote, “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved...” (**Rom. 11:25-26a**)

- ii. In 1 Corinthians Paul spoke about he didn't want us to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts. He wrote, "No concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:" (1 Co. 12:1)
 - iii. In 2 Corinthians Paul spoke about how he didn't want the church to be ignorant of the spiritual battle and tribulations we face. He wrote, "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble [tribulations] which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life." (2 Co. 1:8)
 - iv. And here in our text he speaks about how he doesn't want us to be ignorant of those who have died in Christ and their connection to the return of Christ.
- f. It is interesting to consider that the things Paul specifically mentioned and singled out in his writings as things he didn't want the church to be ignorant of, are the very things that many within the church are divided over.
- i. There is division in the body regarding God's plan for Israel, some think that God is done with Israel, that the church has replaced Israel, but that isn't what Paul taught us in the book of Romans. God still has an amazing plan for the Jews. And yet, this is something many in the church are divided over.
 - ii. There is division in the body regarding spiritual matters, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, are they available today or have they ceased? Some say all are gone, some say only some are gone, others say they are all still available to the church today. Division, where Paul didn't want us to be ignorant.

- iii. There is a lot of uncertainty and ignorance in the church regarding spiritual warfare and the tribulations we face. How we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places as described in Ephesians 6:12. **(Eph. 6:12)**
 - iv. And there is a lot of ignorance when it comes to the dead in Christ and their connection to the return of Christ. There are so many different opinions and teachings out there regarding the return of Christ and the events associated with it that it would make your head spin to try and wrap your head all around them.
 - g. Church family, **God doesn't want us to be ignorant when it comes to these important truths found in the Scripture.** He wants us to be informed, to know and understand these various things Paul spoke about. We have to do our own due diligence to study the Bible and know what it says.
 - h. It was Paul who exhorted young Timothy to “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” **(2 Tim. 2:15)**
 - i. God has given us His word and we have no reason to be ignorant of these matters.
2. Back to our text. Paul didn't want the church in Thessalonica to be ignorant of the dead in Christ, but he also didn't want the church to sorrow as others who have no hope.
- a. Paul makes a very distinct difference between the believer and the unbeliever when it comes to the way we process the death of a loved one.

- b. For the unbeliever, when a loved one passes away, they have no hope to comfort themselves with. They don't believe in an afterlife, they don't believe that there is anything beyond the grave.
 - i. All they can hope for is that their remains go undisturbed that they will either rot in the ground or be burned to ashes to be kept in an urn on a shelf or scatter abroad in various places.
 - ii. Not much comfort or hope in that. It is difficult to grieve without any hope of something greater. Though an unbeliever may like to think that their loved ones "are in a better place", the fact of the matter is that as an unbeliever they aren't in a better place at all.
- c. But believers on the other hand **do have a hope**; a hope of life beyond the grave, the hope of eternity and the hope of heaven.
 - i. As believers, we sorrow, but we don't sorrow as someone who has no hope. We sorrow because we know we are going to miss our loved ones; but if they were a believer, we have a hope that we will see each other again.
 - ii. Death for the believer really is a graduation of sorts; a transition from the temporal to the eternal. It is something that can bring great joy and comfort to our hearts, a hope and confidence that they truly are "in a better place", for they are with Christ in heaven.

B. So as believers we have this hope. And the word hope in the NT is not like the word "hope" we use today.

1. The word "hope" in the Greek speaks of a desire of some good with the expectation of obtaining it. The hope of the NT is a hope that comes with great confidence and assurance.

2. In English we use the word “hope” to speak of things that we wish for but really don’t think will come to pass. We hope we win the lottery. Or we hope our favorite sports team will win a game or a championship. Do we believe they will, or do we have a certain assurance these things will take place. No, we just hope they will. We wish they will.
3. That is not the kind of hope that we have. Our hope is in the afterlife, we have the hope of heaven and the hope of eternity with the Lord.
4. It is something we look forward to with great expectation and with great assurance, we have a confidence in these things.

C. And in the rest of our text this morning, we’re going to highlight some of the various things our hope for the future is based upon. And the first thing we’re going to note is how our hope and comfort are based upon **the return of Christ** in verse 14. Read it with me.

IV. 1 Thessalonians 2:14; The Return of Christ

A. When Paul writes, “if we believe” we need to understand that this sentence is written as a first-class conditional sentence. Unlike in English, in the Greek it is possible for the writer to indicate whether something is true or not based upon the way the sentence is put together.

1. Here in the Greek, Paul is not suggesting the possibility that Jesus didn’t die and rise again. He is stating it as an assumed fact.
2. Often, we can substitute the word “since” in these cases or “because” and it makes more sense to us in English, “Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again” would be perhaps a better way to understand this sentence.
3. In fact, it is translated that way in some of the more modern translations like the ESV and the HCSB. In the NIV they don’t even bother with translating the

Greek and it simply states, “For we believe that Jesus died and rose again”.

a. (The NIV sometimes focuses upon a thought for thought translation instead of a word for word translation and this verse is an example of that method.)

B. We believe that Jesus Christ died upon the cross and rose again on the third day. These are fundamental truths of our faith. What Paul is saying here is that just as true as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is, so too, is the truth that God will bring with Christ those who sleep in Jesus.

C. This verse affirms to us the truth of Christ’s return. Paul clearly states that Christ will come again, and when He does, He will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus, those who died in Christ, or who died as believers in Jesus Christ.

1. Paul alludes to this truth of Christ’s return a few times in our text.

a. Take a look at verse 15 where he speaks of “the coming of the Lord”, and in verse 16 where he speaks about how the Lord Jesus “Himself will descend from heaven...”.

2. Jesus is coming back. The Bible is very clear on this matter. There will be a second coming of Jesus Christ. Many people like to guess as to when this second coming will take place, but the Scriptures tell us that no one knows the day or the hour.

a. Jesus said, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”
(Mt. 24:36)

b. God alone knows the day and hour of Christ’ return. Don’t listen to anyone that goes around trying to claim they know when Christ is going to come back. This is something that only the Father knows.

3. The bible also speaks about a number of events and activities that are associated with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And a lot of people try to figure out when all these things will happen and the order of these events.
 - a. I have my own opinion and thoughts on this matter, but I'm going to wait to share them with you until next week, Lord willing, as we get into chapter 5.
 - b. I think it is safe to say that the Second Coming is an event that will transpire over several years. That the events associated with it will not all happen at the same time, but they will happen during a span of time, much like Jesus' first coming.
 - c. At Jesus' first coming He was born as a babe, He lived a sinless life, He went around teaching and preaching publicly for three years, He died upon the cross of Calvary, He rose again three days later, He walked the earth another 40 days after the resurrection and was seen and heard by many.
 - d. Jesus' first coming had a number of events associated with it that spanned roughly 30 years and I believe Jesus' second coming will be similar; that it will have a number of events associated with it that will span a number of years. But we'll get more into that next week.
4. The fact that Jesus Christ is coming back is something that we can place our hope in and be comforted by.
 - a. Jesus proclaimed, "Let not your heart be troubled; you 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 to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (**Jn. 14:1-3**)

b. Church family, do not let your heart be troubled;
Jesus Christ is coming back for you.

D. Let's continue in our text as we note yet another thing we base our hope and comfort upon. Read verse 15 with me.

V. 1 Thessalonians 2:15; The Revelation by Christ

A. Here we see that we can place our hope and faith upon **the revelation by Christ.**

B. Paul tells us that this truth about Jesus coming and the state of the dead in Christ is something that was revealed to him by the word of the Lord.

1. This wasn't Paul's opinion, or his personal take on the matter. This was something that came to him straight from the Lord.

2. This isn't something we have to wonder about, or make our best guess about. We don't have to be ignorant of these things because God has spoken on this matter, **He has given us His Word.**

3. Now, we don't know if this is something that Paul put together based upon various teachings of Christ or if Jesus came to him specifically and taught these things to him. The Bible does tell us that Paul had a season in which he was instructed by direct revelation from Christ while in the Arabian desert.

a. Galatians states, "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ." (**Gal. 1:11-12**)

4. Perhaps it was during this time that Christ shared with Paul all these details about the return of Christ and the state of those who had passed in Christ and what would happen to those who were alive and remain at His coming.

5. It could be that, or it could simply be that Paul is referencing the things that Jesus Himself taught. Jesus publicly taught about eternal life and the resurrection of the dead.
 - a. In His conversation with Martha that we looked at just last week with Pastor Kevin Johnson, Jesus said to Martha that her brother Lazarus would rise again.
 - b. Martha said, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” (Jn. 11:24-26)”.
6. We don’t have to wonder or worry about death and the future. Jesus has defeated death, He rose from the grave and we too will rise with Him into eternal life.

C. Now, let’s not forget the immediate context here. Paul is addressing the concerns of some of the Christians in Thessalonica about what will happen to those who have died prior to the return of Christ.

1. Paul assures us that Christ Himself had revealed to him that when He returns to this world that He will return with the dead in Christ and those who are alive and remain will not precede them.
2. They aren’t going to miss out, they will be there with Him, they’ll have a front row seat for when He comes for those who are alive and remain.

D. Which leads to our next thing that we can base our hope and comfort upon. Read with me verse 16.

VI. 1 Thessalonians 2:16; Our Resurrection in Christ

- A. Here Paul speaks about our **resurrection in Christ** as something we can base our hope and comfort upon.
- B. Just as Jesus rose from the dead to eternal life so too will those who believe in Him but die prior to His coming. This is referred to as the first resurrection.

1. The bible actually mentions two different types of resurrections. The first resurrection and the second resurrection.
2. The first resurrection is for the just, for those who have been justified by faith in God. The second resurrection is for the unjust, those who have not been justified by faith in God.
 - a. John speaks of these resurrections in the book of Revelation stating, “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power.” (**Rev. 20:6a**)
3. The first resurrection would seem to take place in various stages.
 - a. Jesus Christ is first, He is the firstfruits according to 1 Corinthians 15 where Paul writes, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” (**1 Co. 15:20-26**)
 - b. The destruction of death is connected to the second resurrection that will take place after Christ has returned to the earth and ruled and reigned for a 1,000 years according to Revelation 20.
 - c. After Christ’s 1,000 year reign on earth, Death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire which is the second death and anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (**Rev. 20:14-15**)

4. So based upon what we read in Scripture it would seem that outside of the believers who are alive when Christ returns, all will experience a first death. And all who taste death will be resurrected.
 - a. But only those who are not written in the Book of Life will experience a second death.
 - b. Those who believe and place their faith in Christ will be written in the Book of Life and the second death has no power over them.
5. Now there is some debate as to when other people will rise. Specifically, the OT saints. Many believe that they will be resurrected at the end of what the Bible refers to as the Tribulation, or the time of Jacob's trouble, based upon what Daniel writes in Daniel chapter 12.
 - a. There Daniel mentions that there will be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation. And at that time Daniel's people, the Jews, shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt." (**Dan. 12:1b-2**)
 - b. But even this is a bit confusing for it would seem that those who rise to shame and everlasting contempt do not rise until after the 1,000 year reign of Christ based upon what we read in Revelation 20:5 where it states, "But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." (**Rev. 20:5**)
 - c. And so there is some debate amongst scholars as to when all these things will take place.
6. Though the when of these things is debated by many, the who is not. The Scriptures are quite clear that **all who believe in faith will be resurrected** to be with Christ for the rest of eternity.

7. And this ought to comfort and encourage us all. We will be reunited with our loved ones in Christ.

C. Now, Paul also speaks about our resurrection in 1 Corinthians and what it will be like. There Paul assumed upon a few questions about the resurrection and answered them.

1. He writes, “But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each see its own body.” **(1 Co. 15:35-38)**

2. He continues, “So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, 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 Co. 15:42-44)**

3. So it would seem that when we are resurrected, we will be given a new body; a different body, a glorified body, a body designed and prepared by the Lord that is meant to live for eternity.

4. Our bodies now are made for this earth, but they are wearing away and breaking down, they weren't made to last forever.

a. Some of us here know this better than others. As you get older the body doesn't function the same way it once did.

5. These are temporary bodies. Paul says in 2 Corinthians, “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” **(2 Co. 5:1)**

6. So, our resurrected bodies will be spiritual bodies, bodies made by the Lord Himself that will be eternal.
7. Now this brings up an interesting question about what happens to us while we await our resurrected bodies. If we don't get our resurrected body until the return of Christ what will happen between our death and Christ's return.
 - a. Paul answers this question partly in 2 Corinthians 5. He writes, "So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. (2 Co. 5:6-8)
 - b. When we are alive and at home in this body we are apart from the Lord and His presence in heaven. But the moment we leave these bodies behind, Paul assures us that we will be present with the Lord.
 - c. You see, "ourselves" are not limited to just these bodies. We are body soul and spirit. When we taste of physical death, it is our bodies that die, but our soul and spirit live on.
 - d. And the moment we, as believers, breathe our last breath on earth will be when we breathe our first breath in heaven. **To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.**
 - e. And this is supported by the representation of the dead in Christ coming with Jesus at His second coming. In order for them to come with Him from heaven, they first have to be in heaven.
 - f. So the dead in Christ are with the Lord in heaven and they will come with Him at His second coming. And it would seem that they receive their glorified bodies at the time of the resurrection.

- g. This leads some to believe that we won't have a physical body while awaiting our glorified body, or that we will be given a temporary spiritual body as we await our glorified bodies at His return.
- h. Others hypothesize that since heaven is outside of time and space and everything is in the eternal now that there won't be any waiting at all and that we will have our glorified bodies the moment we enter into heaven. To be honest, I'm not 100% sure. It definitely is something that intrigues me and makes me wonder.

D. Well, let's get back to our text and continue on to the next thing we can base our hope and comfort upon. Read the first part of verse 17 with me.

VII. 1 Thessalonians 2:17a; Our Rapture to Christ

A. Here Paul speaks of an event that we refer to as the Rapture of the church. We can base our hope and comfort upon our **Rapture to Christ**.

1. Now there are some who like to say that the word rapture is not in the Bible and therefore it is something that we shouldn't believe in.
2. But they are mistaken. The word rapture is in the Bible, it's just not in the Greek Bible or in our English or Japanese Bibles.
3. It's actually in the Latin Bible. The word rapture comes from the Latin Vulgate's translation of the phrase, "shall be caught up".
4. In the Greek it is the verb "harpazo", in English it is "caught up", but in Latin it is "rapturus", where we get our English word "rapture" from.

B. The rapture is the belief that **Christ will come and take His church out of the world instantaneously**. This is what is being described here by Paul.

1. There will come a day when Christ 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 and then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up, or raptured, together with the resurrected dead in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.
2. This isn't the only place where Paul speaks about the rapture of the church, for He writes about it in the book of 1 Corinthians as well. There he writes, "Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" (**1 Co. 15:51-54**)
3. This catching away, or rapture will be something that takes place very quickly. Paul describes it as taking place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. As quick as you can blink your eye the rapture will have come and gone.
 - a. It isn't something you will hear and look up and see Christ in the clouds and then quickly try to put your faith in Him. It will be too late by then. It will all happen in the blink of an eye.
 - b. One day there will be a whole bunch of Christians that instantly vanish from this world and it will be crazy and wild here on earth. But we won't be here to be part of the crazy that ensues. For we will be with the Lord in the air.
4. The rapture is when we will put on immortality and we will be transformed into our glorious bodies. We will say good-bye forever to sin and death and we will be

with the Lord forever. That is something I think we can all long for and hope for.

C. And this leads to the final thing we can base our hope and comfort upon. It is **our reunion with Christ**. Read the rest of verse 17 with me.

VIII. 1 Thessalonians 2:17b; Our Reunion with Christ

A. Once the rapture takes place and this corruption puts on incorruption, this mortal puts on immortality then we will be with the Lord forevermore. And that ought to comfort and encourage us all.

1. A day is coming where we will enter into the presence of the Lord never to be separated from His presence. We will spend all of eternity with Him; worshipping Him, glorifying Him, and being in awe of Him.
2. This meeting with the Lord will be a glorious meeting, because we shall enter into God's glory, into His shekinah presence. The glory of God that was too awesome and too powerful for any man to see completely, that left a glow upon the face of Moses after seeing just a small glimpse of it will be before us and we will take it all in.
3. It will be glorious as well because we will have our glorified bodies. The suffering and the wearing away we experienced in these bodies will all be done away with. We will be transformed into our glorious bodies.
4. This meeting with the Lord will be an everlasting meeting, for we shall always be with the Lord. No more waiting, no more longing for heaven. We will have arrived at our final destination and we will remain forever.
5. Our walk on this earth is often spoken of as a pilgrimage. We live as sojourners simply passing through. This world is not our home, our citizenship is in heaven. And when the rapture takes place we will

meet with the Lord and finally complete our pilgrimage, **we will have arrived home.**

6. What a glorious and wonderful hope we have in heaven, our reunion with Christ.

B. Let's take a look at our final verse and we'll wrap this all up. Read with me verse 18.

IX. 1 Thessalonians 2:18; Comfort One Another & Be Ready for Christ

A. Pauls' heart here in 1 Thessalonians 4 was not to give a timeline of end times events. It was not to create an eschatological calendar we can fit together with all the rest of the scripture. The heart was to comfort the believers regarding their lost loved ones in Christ.

B. Paul exhorted the believers in Thessalonica to comfort one another with these words.

1. The return of Christ, the Revelation by Christ, our Resurrection in Christ, our Rapture to Christ, and our Reunion with Christ are all referenced here as a way to comfort one another.

2. And so, I pray that these words are comforting to you. That you are comforted by these truths we talked about today.

a. For most of us, I believe this to be true. But for any who are here who have yet to surrender to the Lord and place their hope and faith in Christ, these words may not be so comforting.

b. I think something that comes out as a result of this study is the need for us to be Ready for Christ.

c. We can only be comforted by the return of Christ, the revelation by Christ, our resurrection in Christ, our rapture to Christ, and our reunion with Christ if we are ready for Christ.

d. I want to encourage and exhort you all to live your lives in such a way that you are ready for Christ.

That you are ready for His coming. Don't put off or delay any longer. Respond to Christ and be obedient to the things He has called you to. Stop putting those things off.

- e. Live your life being **completely ready to meet** your Lord and Savior.
- f. For the day is coming, whether you're ready or not. Prepare now, while you can, so that you will have no regrets then. Amen? Amen. Let's pray.