

Grieve in Hope

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Preacher: Don Kiang Yap

- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, Church. It's good to see all of you here. Before we continue, let us pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us your word. Your word has transforming power. May our hearts and minds be transformed as we ponder over your word. In Jesus' name. Amen.
- There's one particular topic that most of us do not want to talk about. The topic of dying and death.
- We do not even want to think about it. No one wants to face death and the process of dying. But the COVID-19 pandemic has made death a prominent feature in the daily news.
- Every day, people are dying of COVID-19. There's so much grief, so much sorrow, so much hopelessness and despair.
- [1 : 1 2] It is difficult to come to terms with death. No words can describe the trauma. No words can describe the trauma of losing a loved one.
- How does one cope with death? How should you respond if you were to lose your parents? If you were to lose your spouse? If you were to lose your child?
- How should you deal with all the pain and all the sorrows it brings? And how should you respond when it is your turn to face death?
- When the time comes for you to die, is there any real comfort? Is there any real comfort that can sustain you at your deathbed?
- Is there any solid hope? Is there any solid hope that you can cling to when your life is slowly slipping away? Yes, we have such a hope.
- [2 : 2 1] We can find comfort and hope in the Word of God in passages such as 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 13-18.
- When the Thessalonians first believed in the Gospel, when they first believed in the Gospel, they believed that Jesus would come again in their lifetime.
- They believed that they would still be alive to welcome Jesus. But time passed. Time passed. And their loved ones had died.
- The loved ones had passed away. What would happen to them? What would happen to the loved ones that had died when Jesus returned? Would they be handicapped in any way?
- Would they miss out? Would they miss out on the great gathering of God's people? Would they lose out to those who are still alive to welcome the return of our Lord Jesus?
- [3 : 2 9] These were the questions troubling them. Here, in this passage, Paul answers their question. Paul tells them that our hope, our hope is based on what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in the past and also what the Lord will do for us in the future.
- Paul points them back to the historical fact of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and also points them forward to the glorious return of our Lord Jesus.

Look back. Look back and be grateful for what Jesus has done for you. Look forward. Look ahead. And be hopeful for what the Lord will do.

The way we look at death, the way we look at the resurrection and the return of our Lord Jesus will make a great difference not only to the way we live but also to the way we die.

Notice how Paul begins by addressing the Thessalonians' confusion. He writes in verse 13, We do not want you to be uninformed.

[4 : 51] We do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind who have no hope.

And then in the first part of verse 15, he says, According to the Lord's word, we tell you. Why are they grieving? Why are they grieving hopeless?

Why are they grieving in hopelessness? Because they are ignorant of God's word. Paul says, We do not want you to be uninformed.

We do not want you to be ignorant of the word of God. If you do not know God's word, you will not understand death from God's perspective.

Ignorance of God's word will surely lead to confusion, worry, and frustration. Have any of you experienced sleepless nights?

[5 : 55] Have any of you experienced restless days? Have you? There are nights that you cannot fall asleep. There are days filled with restlessness. Why do we have sleepless nights?

Why do we have restless days? Because our hearts are troubled. Troubled by circumstances. Troubled by people. Or troubled by things.

All these sleepless nights, all these restless days, could have been avoided if only we learn to see our circumstances from the perspective of God's word.

What do I do when I have sleepless nights? I do have sleepless nights. What do I do? I will do this. I will lie on my bed. I will turn on the YouTube channel.

Listen to the YouTube channel on someone reading God's promises. This person who reads God's promises has a very soothing voice.

[7 : 00] You read God's promises in the Bible. Even if I cannot fall asleep, my mind is dwelling on God's promises and not on things that are troubling me.

God's word will eventually change the way we look at troubling issues. That's why Paul redirects the attention of the Thessalonians to God's word.

Do not be uninformed. Do not be ignorant. Listen. Listen to God's word. Here, Paul's instruction is more pastoral rather than repeat this.

Here, Paul's instruction is more pastoral rather than doctrinal. His concern is to give pastoral exhortation. He wants to give pastoral encouragement to a grieving church.

He is not providing a detailed explanation about future events. You will not find answer to every question about what is going to happen in the future.

[8 : 20] in this passage of Thessalonians, Paul uses the word sleep three times.

Verse 13, verse 14, and verse 15 to describe the death of Christians. He uses the word sleep to describe the death of Christians.

our Lord Jesus also used this word sleep to describe the death of believers. This is important because sleep is never final.

Sleep is not a permanent event. Sleep is always temporary. When we go to sleep, we are expected to wake up a few hours later.

and this sleep refers to our physical body. When believers die, our physical bodies sleep.

[9 : 22] Their spirit will go directly into the presence of God. For the Christian, death is not the end of our lives.

Death is just our bodies sleeping. Paul wants the Thessalonians to understand that believers who die suffer no loss. They experience no defeat.

Their bodies may be asleep in the grave, but the day will come when they will surely wake up. The Christians therefore have every reason to be filled with hope.

That's why at a Christian funeral, at a Christian funeral, there's much singing, there's much comfort, there's much assurance from God's promises.

But is there a place for grief? Is there a place for grief? Yes. When someone dies, it is natural to feel sad.

[10 : 31] It is natural to cry. Even Jesus cried at the tomb of Lazarus. We cry when a loved one dies because we miss him.

We miss his presence. We miss hearing his familiar voice. We miss seeing his smiling face. We miss the touch of his hand.

So when someone we love dies, grief is absolutely a natural response. Grief is the right emotion to feel.

In fact, we need to grieve as a way of processing our pain. We need to express, we need to be able to express our sadness. We can cry to God, we can lament to God how we miss the person.

That is not wrong. Otherwise, bitterness and anger will creep into our spiritual lives. If you are grieving today, you need to allow yourself time and space to let your heart catch up with what you know to be true from God's word.

[11 : 51] In other words, let your heart catch up with your head. If you are supporting someone grieving, you also need to allow that person time and space to let their hearts catch up with their heads.

Sometimes, this process takes months and it can even take years. But we must not grieve. We must not grieve like the rest of mankind who have no hope.

We do not grieve forever. We must not grieve in hopelessness. We are not hopeless. We do have a blessed hope.

We can grieve in hope. Paul continues in verse 14. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again. And so we believe that God will bring to Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

God did not create us to die. He made us to live with him. Death is a punishment for sinning against God.

[13 : 08] Death is never seen as a good thing in the Bible. It is an enemy of mankind. This is why it feels so wrong.

It feels so wrong whenever a loved one dies. But Paul says that we believe we believe Jesus died and rose again.

The death and resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact. It really happened in history. It is rooted in verifiable history.

It really happened in the real world. This is a solid foundation of our future hope. The statement for we believe that Jesus died is the cornerstone of this foundation.

Without the death of Christ, Christianity crumbles. Jesus died to take away our sins. His death transforms our death into sleep.

[14 : 19] Our death has turned into sleep because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross. Death has become sleep. What a transformation.

Jesus has indeed transformed our death into sleep. The Thessalonians need to be reminded of this very truth that transforms their lives.

Such a reminder is important for every generation. we need to be reminded every generation need to be reminded of this truth. Remember your conversion experience when you first believed in Jesus?

When you really believed in Jesus, when you really believed what Jesus has done for you on the cross? Do you still remember? Do you still remember when you first believed in Jesus?

Of course you remember. But many years have passed since your conversion experience. We tend to think less and less about this conversion experience.

[15 : 30] Is this conversion experience important? Of course it is. Then why think less and less about it? You know why?

You know why? Because we simply move on to what we think are bigger and better things. We move on. We move on to bigger and better things.

We must never lose the wonder of what Christ has done for us. Without his sacrifice, without his sacrifice on the cross, we have no hope.

Nothing in our lives is bigger and better than what Christ has done for us. we should think more and more of what Christ has done for us.

Do you notice something? Whenever Pastor Brian invites someone new to speak in our church, before someone preaches the word, our pastor will interview a short interview with that new speaker, new preacher.

[16 : 41] And Pastor Brian always asks this question. You know what the question is? He always asks one question. He will ask this, can you tell us how you came to know the Lord Jesus?

Tell us how you became a Christian. You notice every time he interviews. This question gives the preacher the opportunity to recall what the Lord Jesus has done for him on the cross.

In all our conversion experience, when we give a testimony, in all our conversion experience, there is always a time that we really believe in what the Lord Jesus has done for us on the cross.

We believe. We really, really believe. Paul says, for we believe that Jesus died and rose again.

Rose again. after mentioning Jesus' death, Paul goes on to talk about Jesus' resurrection. Our Christian hope does not depend only on the death of Christ.

[17 : 52] It also depends on the resurrection of Jesus. The death and resurrection of Jesus together is the gospel we preach.

We need the death of Jesus. we also need the resurrection of Jesus. The death of Jesus purchased our redemption and the resurrection of Jesus proves our redemption.

The resurrection of Jesus guarantees our hope for eternity. Jesus says, because I live, you also will live.

Because I live, you also will live. If you were to ask me, if you were to ask me, of all the personalities, of all the persons in the Bible, recorded in the Bible, who should I study first?

My answer, study the life and teaching of Jesus. You can know everything about Bible. If you don't know Jesus, you are still lost. Study the life and teachings of our Lord Jesus.

[18 : 58] And then your second question maybe, of the whole, what do you call, what part of the life and teachings of Jesus should I start with?

Which part? My answer, study the resurrection of Jesus. Study the resurrection of Jesus. Why?

Because the resurrection of Jesus is our assurance that God keeps his word. Paul says that, for we believe Jesus died and rose again.

So we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. In him. Notice these words, in him. If you have put your trust in Jesus, there will be a powerful union, a powerful union, deep union between you and Jesus.

You are in him. Being in him means that whatever happens to Jesus also happens to you. He has died and rise again.

[20 : 11] If you are in him, then you also die and rise again. You have the same experience as Jesus because of this powerful link in him.

we believe Jesus died, taking our punishment and rose again. And so we believe that Jesus will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in him.

Paul goes on in verses 15 17. Paul says, Paul has a special revelation from the Lord. He says, verses 15 to 17, according to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, what left until the coming of the Lord will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

And so we will be with him, so we will be with the Lord forever. Whenever we discuss the topic of the second coming of Christ, the conversation will usually revolve around signs and dates.

[21 : 38] What are the signs will happen before Jesus comes? What year? What date? Will Jesus most likely return? The Thessalonians were like you and me.

They too wanted to know when Jesus Christ will return, when Jesus will come again. But Paul tells them all the information they needed, not what they wanted, but what they needed.

Their concern, their concern should not be the date when Jesus will come. Their concern should be how faithfully they're living until he comes.

Paul does not tell them the date of Jesus return. What he tells them is a sequence, the sequence of events that will occur when Jesus return. First, he says, the Lord himself will come down from heaven.

The Lord himself will come down from heaven. Verse 16. What a great encouragement for Christians. There's no greater encouragement than this.

[22 : 55] The Lord himself will come to gather his people personally. He left heaven the first time to come to earth to die for us personally.

And he will leave heaven the second time to take believers to be with him personally. Jesus says in John chapter 14 verses 1 to 3.

Jesus says, don't let your hearts be trouble. Trust in God. Trust in God. Trust also in me. There are many rooms in my father's house.

In my father's house there are many rooms. I will not tell you if it were not true. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

After I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back. I will come back and take you to be with me so that you may be where I am.

[24 : 09] Jesus will keep his promise. He will come back again personally, personally for you and me and for everyone who believes in him.

Second, Christ's return will be a very noisy and public one. It will be a spectacular event on a scale that will surpass anything the world has ever seen.

It is a spectacular event. It will be witnessed by everybody on earth. There is nothing secret about his return. There will be a loud command plus the voice of an archangel and back up by the trumpet call of God.

And this loud command from the Lord produces an instant response. The bodies of the dead believers are miraculously transformed.

The souls come back into them and they will rise out from the grave. John chapter 5 verse 28 says this, for a time, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear Jesus' voice and come out.

[25 : 31] I think the voice of Jesus will surely include calling out the names of every believer in the graves just as the way he called out Lazarus.

He said, Lazarus, come out. He knows my name. He knows your name. He will call us by our names.

Jason Tagal, it's time to wake up. Ivy Lim, it's time to wake up. Jason Ng, it's time to wake up.

1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 52, describing the same events. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever, and we who are living will be transformed.

And then verse 55, O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? this is the moment when Jesus' power over the world is seen and his life-giving voice transforms us.

[26 : 50] Death is our enemy. But for Christians, death is our defeated enemy, an enemy that cannot harm us anymore, an enemy that we do not need to fear anymore.

Third, thirdly, the church will be caught up together to be with Jesus. Here, Paul is not talking about Christians mysteriously disappearing, leaving non-Christians behind.

Instead, he is reassuring the church that those who die will not miss Christ's return. Those dead in Christ and those alive in Christ will be gathered together to be with Jesus.

All of us, the dead and alive will be gathered to be with him. It will be the most impressive family reunion in history.

Just imagine the joy of seeing the brother, the joy of seeing the sister whose funeral you had attended some time ago. Now, he or she is alive, no longer looking frail or weak with age, but in a perfectly healthy body.

[28 : 17] It will be absolutely glorious. The best thing, the best thing is that we will be with Jesus.

Not just for a short time, not even for a thousand years, but forever. This is what we were made for. We were made to live with God.

We were made to live with God. Enjoy relating with God and with each other forever. The Lord Jesus will surely return.

God will complete his plan of salvation. The world of sin, the world of pain, sickness, and death will end once for all. And we will finally live with God forever.

That is our hope. No wonder Paul finishes with verse 18. Therefore, encourage one another with these words.

[29 : 23] Therefore, encourage one another with these words. What does Paul want to see happening in our church? He wants people to see. He wants to see people encouraging each other with the hope we have in Christ.

If someone loses a loved one, if someone is facing death, encourage them. Remember the hope we have in Christ. Encourage them with the word of God.

It is so easy to forget what Jesus has said. It is so easy to forget what Jesus has promised. No wonder we struggle to find peace today.

No wonder we worry so much about life tomorrow. That's why we need to encourage one another with the word of God. Charles Wesley says this, our people die well.

Our people die well. What he means is Christians die well. Why? Why Christians die well? Because we can look forward to being with Jesus. We can look forward to the new creation.

[30 : 34] We know that those who have died in Jesus will rise again. People you know will die. If Jesus has not returned, you and I will also die.

Let us encourage one another to die well. to die victoriously, to die with hope. What begins with ignorance, what begins with grief and hopelessness ends with comfort.

Only God could take the deepest of human sorrows and transform them into hope. Only God can take the deepest human sorrows and transform them into hope.

hope. That is exactly what this passage is about. Hope. Death does not have the final word. Into the darkness of confusion, God shines the light of his truth.

God's truth can transform ignorance into understanding. God's truth can transform grief into joy. God's truth can transform hopelessness into assurance.

[31 : 50] So an understanding of God's truth is so vital to Christian living. Jesus is coming. He's coming soon.

He's coming for you and me. He's coming for the church. We as believers will always be with him. Before we close, I would like to say a word to those who have yet to believe in Jesus.

Those who have yet to put their trust in Jesus. The comfort and hope you have heard about today is found nowhere else except in Jesus Christ.

It is only by receiving Jesus as your Savior and Lord that you can have an eternal hope, an endless hope. I urge you to repent of your sins and to believe in Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

if the Lord Jesus is speaking to your heart now, then come to him now. Do not delay any further. Dying without Christ means that you will not experience any of these wonderful things that Jesus had promised.

[33 : 08] Instead of experiencing resurrection, you will experience condemnation. And instead of enjoying eternal reunion with Christ, you will suffer eternal separation from him.

With Christ in your life, you have an endless hope. Without Christ, you will have a hopeless end. Which is your final destiny?

An endless hope or a hopeless end? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that our Lord Jesus has conquered death and is coming again for us.

When our hearts are troubled by death, remind us, Lord, remind us, Lord, that death is a defeated enemy and we can face death victoriously.

in Jesus' name we pray.