

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

Matthew 7:13-14 “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. (14) For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

There is no accusation which is quite so commonly and frequently brought against the Christian way of life as the charge of narrowness. It is a charge that is constantly brought against the individual Christian believer by that type of man who, in his desire to show his own breadth of mind describes himself as a man of the world. He is so broad that nothing but world dimensions can give you a true impression of the width and largeness of his views! I fear at times also it is true to say that there is no accusation concerning which the average Christian is quite so frightened as this charge of narrowness. To some Christians at the present time, it is more or less immaterial what men may say about them as long as they do not describe them as narrow. [Evangelistic Sermons at Aberavon, Lloyd-Jones, Banner of Truth]

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*The Lord Will Descend From
Heaven*

June 8, 2025

Sermon Text: 1 Thessalonians
4:13-18

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 25

The Scripture passage we are looking at this morning is found in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonian church, chapter 4 beginning at verse 13 –

encourage one another with these words.

The Apostle here describes for us what the Lord revealed to him concerning this greatest event in all of human history which is yet to come – the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory:

Revelation 1:7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

Last Lord's Day, you will recall, we observed Ascension Sunday on which we considered the doctrine of our Lord's Ascension into heaven in glory, to be crowned King of kings. This morning I would like us to consider His *descent* for one final time into this world to take His Bride, the Church.

This past week Verla and I attended the memorial service of a genuine Christian friend we first met 54 years ago. She suffered

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. (14) For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. (15) For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore

greatly in this world, paralyzed for the last 25 years from an accident, and enduring the progressive advance of Parkinson's. We saw her just a few weeks ago and she told us that the next time we visited she probably would not be able to speak anymore. Then on May 30th, the Lord called her home. Her mortal remains were buried in a little cemetery out in the countryside north of Albany.

But she is not there.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, (7) for we walk by faith, not by sight. (8) Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Paul's words to us here in his letter to the Thessalonians is meant for this purpose:

That we may not grieve as others do who have no hope, but instead,

when death strikes, that we comfort and encourage one another.

This is a high privilege of every one of Christ's true people – to be free of the tyranny and dominion and fear of death and to meet it with a confident hope, that Christ is coming again and we will be reunited with all of those loved ones who have *fallen asleep in Jesus*.

Let's look more carefully now at the Word of God which we are to believe:

1 Thessalonians 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

The Christian has a certain *hope*. Those who are dead in sin, without Christ, *are hopeless in the face of death*. We must be fully informed of this truth. It is vital!

What is this information which Paul gives – *it concerns those who have fallen asleep*.

When the New Testament speaks of the death of Christians, it uses this term – *fallen asleep*. For example:

1 Thessalonians 4:14-15 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. (15) For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

John 11:11 After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.”

These passages do not teach the false doctrine of “soul sleep” which some of the cults adhere to. It does not mean that when the Christian dies he or she enters into an

unconscious state until the Lord awakens them. *It is a reference to the body*. The body of the believer “sleeps” until Christ comes and raises us in glorified bodies. But the soul, the real person, is in glory the moment the body dies, present with the Lord.

So Paul is speaking to us here about *those brothers and sisters in Christ who have died*. He is showing us *that we have no need to grieve as others who do not have hope*.

Think of it. The man or woman or young person who is outside of Christ, dead in sin, under the judgment of the Law, *has no hope*.

Ephesians 2:12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Their grief in the face of death *is a hopeless grief*. No hope of heaven. No hope of “a better place.” No hope of reunion with loved ones.

No hope of seeing the Lord. And therefore when death strikes their grief is a hopeless grief. I have seen it and perhaps some of you have as well.

I have had occasion as a police officer and as a pastor to deliver the sad news of the death of a loved one to people who are dead in sin, without Christ. It is a terrible thing to see such people wailing and even cursing God as this hopelessness strikes home to them.

The Christian must not and need not grieve as others do who have no hope when death strikes. For us, its power, its sting, its reign and rule over us is broken once and for all by Christ. Jesus has conquered death:

1 Thessalonians 4:14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

And because the Christian is united to Christ, WE have died and risen again. This means:

That those believers who have died, who have fallen asleep, are present with the Lord right now and when Christ comes again He is going to bring them with Him.

He who *ascended* is going to *descend* in glory once again to reunite all of His saints with Him and with one another.

The thing is certain:

“For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord...”

Paul is about to give us more information about that great Day which the Lord had revealed to Him. Specifically:

“...that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.”

Some Christians will still be alive in this world when Christ comes again. All of us hope to be in that generation, not having to taste of death. But this is certain – that we are going to see and here it:

1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

This is the great resurrection of Christ's people. And it is going to be a very LOUD event! *A cry of command, the voice of an archangel, the trumpet of God – it is literally loud enough to wake the dead!* And so it shall-

“...we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep...*the dead in Christ will rise first.*”

Now, notice something carefully here. When Christ comes, He is going to bring with Him *those who have fallen asleep*. Certainly this tells us that those believers who have died are WITH Jesus now. When these, *the dead in Christ*, are raised from the grave, it is their glorified bodies which are raised to be united with them. Of our friend who has fallen asleep in Jesus it can

be said (and would be a great and fitting epitaph) – *She is not here, why do you seek the living among the dead?*

What, then, is it in which believers who are still living in this world when Jesus comes again, will not precede those who have fallen asleep? *It is the resurrection. They will be raised first, the we who are alive and remain will be changed:*

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

“And so we will always be with the Lord.” Think of it. *Always*. Never again to be separated from Him or one another.

In this life, we all experience *separation*. It is inevitable in a

world of time and space. The years roll by – our lives here are very short. Time moves on and we depart this world – separation from one another by death. We experience lesser separations – friends move far away and we are separated from one another. Separation is painful and grievous.

But all of that comes to an end when Christ comes again. We shall ALWAYS be with the Lord face to face and we will ALWAYS be with one another forever in that new heavens and earth.

Looking for Him

Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, (12) training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, (13) waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

Our blessed hope. What is it? What is this hope which characterizes

Christ's true people? *The appearing of Christ in glory.* Those who are truly born again keep looking up. We do not focus our sight and attention and cravings upon worldly passions and love for this present world. No. We are looking for something else, just a Abraham did:

Hebrews 11:9-10 By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. (10) For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

One of the reasons that Christ's people must not neglect the gathering together with one another is this: *Therefore encourage one another with these words.* This world is not a very friendly place. There is much suffering and grief, especially when death strikes and we are separated by it. But then we comfort one another with these truths – this is not the end for us. Christ is coming. We will see one

another again. The resurrection is coming. This life and world is not all that there is.

Listen to Thomas Brooks, from a sermon he preached in 1651 at the funeral of a Godly woman entitled *The Saint's Last Day is his Best Day*:

I shall first demonstrate the truth, that a believer's last day is his best day!

1. Death is a change of PLACE. When a believer dies, he does but change his place. He changes earth for heaven, a wilderness for a Canaan, an Egypt for a land of Goshen, a dunghill for a palace: as it is said of Judas, that "he went to his place," [Acts 1:25](#). An unbeliever is not yet in his place—hell is his place. Just so, when a believer dies he goes to his place. Heaven, the bosom of Christ, is his place. And that speaks out the truth asserted, that a believer's dying day is his best day.

2. Death is a change of COMPANY. In this world, the godliest man must live with the wicked, and converse with the wicked, etc.; and this is a part of their misery; it is their hell on this side heaven. This stuck upon the spirit of David: [Psalm 120:5](#), "Woe to me that I dwell in Meshech, that I live among the tents of Kedar!" [I have read of a godly woman, who, being near death, cried out, "O Lord, let me not go to hell where the wicked are, for you know that I never loved their company while in this life!"] And so [Jer. 9:2](#), "Oh, that I had in the desert a lodging place for travelers, so that I might leave my people and go away from them; for they are all adulterers, a crowd of unfaithful people!" And this was that that did vex and tear Lot's righteous soul: [2 Peter 2:7-8](#), "Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard." Oh—but death is a change of company. A godly man does but change the company of profane people, of vile people, etc.,

for the company of angels; and the company of weak Christians for the company of just men made perfect.

3. Death is a change of Employment. The truth is, the very life of a believer is a continual warfare. Believers have to deal with subtle enemies, malicious enemies, vigilant enemies, and untiring enemies. They have to deal with such enemies as threw down Adam in paradise, the most innocent man in the world, and that threw down Moses, the meekest man in the world, and Job, the patientest man in the world, and Joshua, the most courageous man in the world, and Paul, the best apostle in the world, etc. A Christian's life is a warfare. Job says, "All the time of my warfare will I wait, until my change come," [Job 14:14](#). "I am still a-fighting," says Job, "with lusts and corruptions within, and with devils and men abroad!" "All the time of my warfare will I wait until my change come." Just so, in [2 Tim.](#)

[4:8](#), "I have fought the good fight of faith," etc.

Death is a change of employment. It changes our hard service, our work that lies in mourning, wrestling, and fighting—for rejoicing and singing hallelujahs to the Almighty! No longer prayers—but praises! No longer fighting and wrestling—but dancing and triumphing! Can a believing soul look upon this glorious change, and not say, Surely "better is the day of a believer's death than the day of his birth"? Death's shroud wipes away all tears from the believer's eyes! [Rev. 7:9](#).

4. . Death is a change, which puts an end to all CHANGES. What is the whole life of a man—but a life of changes? Death is a change that puts an end to all **external** changes. Here on earth, you often change your joy for sorrow, your health for sickness, your strength for weakness, your honor for dishonor,

your plenty for poverty, your beauty for deformity, your friends for foes, your silver for brass, and your gold for copper. Now the comforts of a man are smiling, the next hour they are dying, etc. All temporals are as transitory as a rapid torrent, a ship, a bird, an arrow, a runner who passes by. Man himself—the king of these outward comforts—what is he—but a mere nothing?—the dream of a dream, a shadow, a bubble, a flash, a blast. Now death puts an end to all external changes: there shall be no more sickness, no more complaints, no more needs, etc.

Therefore, do not grieve as others who have no hope. Encourage one another with these words:

Never mourn immoderately at the death of any believer, let them be the most excellent and useful who ever lived. Death is not the death of the man—but the death of his sin. Death is to them the greatest gain; and it speaks out

much selfishness in us to be more absorbed with the gain and benefit which redounds to us by their lives, than with the happiness and glory that redounds to them by their deaths. In the primitive times, when God had passed the sentence of death upon their dearest comforts, Christians behaved at a more high, sweet, and noble rate than now-a-days they do.

Remember this—death does that in a moment, which no graces, no duties, nor any ordinances could do for a man all his lifetime! Death frees a man from those diseases, corruptions, temptations, etc., that no duties, nor graces, nor ordinances could do. When Abraham came to mourn for his deceased Sarah, he mourned moderately for her, because her dying-day was her best day. When Luther, that famous instrument of God, buried his daughter, he was not seen to shed a tear. Just so, Mr. Whately, who was famous in his time, where as he had preached his

own child's funeral sermon upon this subject, "The will of the Lord be done," he and his wife laid their own child in the grave. [The people in Thrace mourn and greatly lament at the birth of their children, because of the sorrows and troubles they are born to; and they greatly joy and rejoice at the death of their children, because death is the funeral of all their sorrows. Death is not such as some would paint it. It was the saying of a heathen man, That the whole life of a man should be nothing else but a meditation on death. See [Deut. 32:29](#). Alexander the Great did ask the Indian philosopher how long a man should live; says he, Until he think it better to die than to live.] That is the first use, let us not mourn immoderately for any believer's death.

2. Do not fear death. Compose your spirits; say not of death as that wicked prince said to the prophet, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" [1 Kings 21:20](#)—but rather long for it, not to be rid of

troubles—but that the soul may be taken up to a more clear and full enjoyment of God. Your dying-day is your best day. Good *Jacob* dies with a sweet composed spirit; he calls for his children, and blesses and kisses them, and gathers up his feet into his bed, and dies. *Moses*, that morning that the messenger came to him, and told him he must die, he goes up the hill, sees the land of Canaan at a distance, and dies. Joseph built his sepulcher in his own garden. And some philosophers had their graves always open before their gates, that going out and coming in they might always think of death, for in life they found comforts to be rare, crosses frequent, pleasures momentary, and pains permanent. Believers, your dying-day is your best day. Oh, then, be not afraid of death, and that you may not, remember that it is not such a slight matter as some make it, to be unwilling to die. There is much reproach cast upon God, by

believers being unwilling to die. You talk much of God, heaven, and glory, etc.—and yet when you should come to go and share in this glory, you shrug and say, "Spare me a little while!" Is not this a reproach to the God of glory?

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore encourage one another with these words.