

Friday: *Instructions*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11 ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

<p>Reflect: The famous triad – faith, love, and hope – is complete once again. Paul referenced it earlier (1:3), but when a report came from Timothy only faith and love were mentioned (cf. 3:6). For some reason the “hope” of the Thessalonian Christians was deficient. Yet after teaching on the plight of their dead loved ones “in Christ,” as well as addressing what will happen to those persecuting them, hope has been restored.</p> <p>Verse nine is important for us to grasp. Those who are “in Christ” are saved from God’s wrath (which is final justice directed toward all who reject God and His love for them), but as this letter makes clear, they are not saved from persecution (cf. 2:2; 3:1-4; 4:13).</p> <p>Notice how verse 10 makes living with Jesus a present reality. While Christians will one day experience the “new heavens and new earth” – we can experience them, in an incomplete sense, now. After all, eternal life is knowing God and Jesus (Jn17:3). Others need to know these facts; we need to continually live them (4:18; 5:11).</p>	<p>Respond: Who have you encouraged in their faith this week?</p> <p>What area of the world, suffering persecution, have you been praying for this week?</p> <p>How can you live today as if Jesus is right beside you the whole time? Will you act differently? What will you do that is the same?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for Prairie View Christian Camp; another mission New Life supports. Pray for Bob Griffin and Larry Hayes – elders of New Life. Thank God for the salvation you are currently living. Pray your awareness of God’s presence will continue to grow. Continue to pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.</p>	

Saturday: *Big Picture*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 ¹² We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves... ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you...

<p>Reflect: All around the world people will show up tomorrow at Church Buildings. Many will be present because they have a hand in making sure Sunday goes “smoothly.” The number of people with “a hand” involved to help Sunday mornings “happen” is likely astounding. Virtually every (American) congregation has people who are greeters, band members, nursery workers, teachers, janitors, bulletin makers, etc.</p> <p>New Life is blessed to have people committed to “us,” but there is always room for more. In fact there is always room for more of everything (the good things that is) when it comes to “church.” There is room for more repentance, more souls, more money, more teaching, more friendships, more...</p> <p>The reason there is room for more is because God is so BIG. It has been said the Kingdom of God is where God reigns in the hearts and minds of mankind. Tomorrow we will spend some time in prayer for our brothers and sisters who are suffering persecution around the world.</p>	<p>Respond: How are you serving in God’s Kingdom?</p> <p>Do you see unmet needs at New Life? What can you do about them?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for the National Missionary Convention; a mission New Life supports. Pray for Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, and Mike Haag – deacons at New Life. Pray for services tomorrow all around the world – pray God is glorified. Ask God to help you be a more thankful person. Pray our worship service tomorrow will be pleasing to God.</p>	

It Changes Everything...

November 1 – 7

The year 2012 is rapidly approaching. Well thank you Captain Obvious, you may be thinking, tell me something I did not know. If you type 2012 in a google search you will have nearly 200 Million hits. That number will only grow as 2012 approaches and more talk about “the end” occurs.

Why the fascination with 2012? Well, the reasons are many; one is because the Mayan calendar supposedly “runs out” (or at least resets itself). Another reason is because many are constantly on “the lookout” for Jesus’ return.

Of the two reasons above, “b” (i.e., Jesus’ return) is certainly worth getting excited about. After all, it is going to happen. Yet sadly, the speculation around His return often leads many astray, harms – and even ends – the faith of others, and at times makes a mockery of Christianity. The last one ought to tick you off a bit...well they all should actually.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 is often referred to as Paul’s teaching concerning the “secret rapture” of the church. Lord willing, at some point in the future, we will look more in depth at ‘all things eschatological’ in the Bible (i.e., events associated with the end of time). Yet that statement in and of itself is a bit misleading. In reality, the entire New Testament is eschatological in nature.

Oh where to start... You can get on our website (www.nlccoe.com) and listen to some teaching concerning the “last days.” You will find the “Radio Spots” page under the “Resources” tab. Granted, those teachings are not exhaustive (they are in 60 second intervals you know), but they do clearly lay out the fact that we are living in the “last days” – and have been since the time of Jesus.

So why does 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 persist as being a text believed to teach a “secret rapture?” There are many answers – but two will suffice for now. Ignoring context is one. After all, as verse 18 (of chapter four) makes clear – Paul wrote those words for comfort...not to satisfy a lust to know the future (remember, v13 possibly indicates martyrs).

Not properly understanding words is another reason. The phrase “to meet” in 4:17 uses a specific Greek word (*apantasis*) which was used when a person of importance was met at a distance from a city (or the destination point) and escorted back with much celebration (cf. Mt25:6; 28:15). In other words, Jesus is escorted back to earth...but please do not think of an “earthly reign” as in “the millennium.” Lord willing we will get to that later as well.

Once Jesus comes back, the 2nd and only time, it is all over. Evil will be vanquished and the new heavens and new earth will come to fruition. Now that is something to get excited about! In light of that – what type of people ought we now to be?

Monday: Unavoidable

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 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. 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.

<p>Reflect: Despite the many differences which seem to separate humanity (e.g., income, geographic location, ethnicity, language, occupations, etc.), we have much in common. Here Paul touches on a common aspect of all humanity – the experience of grief.</p> <p>In order to be the caring and loving people we desire to be, we need to keep this passage (pericope) in its context. Paul is speaking to living Christians about physically dead Christians. This does not apply if the deceased was not “in Christ” (sorry). Other factors will become apparent as we continue this week...</p> <p>The statement in verse fourteen appears to be an early church creed. Why is that? Up to this point, Paul repeatedly wrote “you know” (e.g., 1:5; 2:1,2,5,11; 3:3,4, et al). Yet here, for the first time, Paul used “believe” in reference to something they “know.” Also, the word for “rose again” is not a word typically used by Paul. Furthermore, this is the only time “Jesus” is used without “Christ” or “Lord” in this letter.</p>	<p>Respond: Who was the last person you knew, “in Christ,” who died? What are some good memories of them?</p> <p>What are other common aspects shared by humanity?</p> <p>Do we take what happens in life, and particularly after life (i.e., eternal destiny), seriously enough?</p>
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Pray: Continue to pray for Ryan Nelson, the newest “church planter” hired by the CEA. Pray for sensitivity towards those who have lost loved ones. Ask God to help you continue to grow in your love for all people. Continue to pray for workers in God’s Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

Tuesday: Whose Authority?

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 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...and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

<p>Reflect: Many people struggle with authority today. Many live with the illusion of being their own person. They call their own shots. They don’t have to answer to anyone. They know what is best for them, etc. How foolish!</p> <p>Paul had no problem with authority (at least he sought to be obedient to God’s authority). When a person reads the words of Jesus, and then reads the words of Paul, it is very clear Who shaped Paul’s thinking. Here Paul does not hide it; he says ‘this is from Jesus – so pay attention.’ It is very similar to how he previously appealed to God when exhorting about sexuality (cf. 1Thess4:8).</p> <p>Unfortunately these verses have a “short history” of being used and abused. I say this because many find the “secret rapture” of the church here, which is a false teaching (if that sounds blunt...well it is). I say a “short history” because for over 1,800 years no one had even thought of a “secret rapture.” Why would God take His people away from the earth when those heading to hell on the earth need the saving message of the gospel?</p>	<p>Respond: What would really happen, in a “free country,” if you lived as if you were totally free?</p> <p>Why is submitting to authority so hard for people today?</p> <p>While certainly not exhaustive, www.nlccoe.com has quite a bit of teaching on the “secret rapture” under Radio Spots.</p>
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Pray: Pray for God to be at work at LCS, MCC, and OCC; missions we support. Continue to pray for the Unity and Purity of New Life. Pray for a heart that is willing to submit to proper authority; pray the Holy Spirit will guide you to know what it is. Continue to pray for God’s people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

Wednesday: What Day?

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. ² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, “There is peace and security,”... then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

<p>Reflect: Paul is not talking about the shift from Summer to Autumn or anything like that. The phrase “times and seasons” points toward the fulfillment of God’s purposes (cf. Acts1:7; Dan2:21). Yet as verse two makes clear, we do not know when God will (definitively) act – we only know that He will act (Mt24:36).</p> <p>In this first part of chapter five the topic at hand is still the same (i.e., the end of this world as we know it), yet the focus is different. In 4:13-18 the focus was on comfort for the Christians. Here in chapter five the focus is a warning/threat. However, it is not for Christians, but for nonbelievers (after all, what do we have to fear?).</p> <p>This can be seen with the use of “the day of the Lord.” Previously Paul wrote about the <i>parousia</i> (i.e., the coming) of Jesus (2:19; 3:13; 4:15). That event will be wonderful for believers; yet the gospel is a double-edged sword (cf. Jn3:16,18). Jesus’ 2nd Coming will also bring justice – the destruction of God’s enemies (a common theme of “the day of the Lord”).</p>	<p>Respond: “Peace and security” was Roman propaganda to generate loyalty to the Empire. Yet is peace and security possible outside of God?</p> <p>Are you concerned about when Jesus will come back?</p> <p>Who should you warn about Jesus’ coming? Are you praying for them?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Shiloh Home of Hope and Emporia Christian Schools. Ask God to make you sensitive to the “lostness” of this world. Pray you will continually live as if Jesus could come back at any moment. Continue to pray for God’s Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

Thursday: Contrasts

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:4-7 ⁴ But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.

<p>Reflect: Once again Paul uses a referent for the people of God found in the Old Testament, “children of light,” and applies it to the people of the new covenant. In other words, descriptors reserved exclusively for Israel in the Old Testament (e.g., church in 1:1, loved by God and chosen in 1:4, etc.) continue to be applied to the “new Israel” (anyone in Christ) in the New Testament.</p> <p>We should not make the mistake of thinking Paul is warning Christians against certain behaviors. Paul’s point is that as “children of light” their life is different than those who are in darkness. This is why the uncertainty about Jesus’ 2nd Coming is not a worry for Christians – they are ready.</p> <p>The imagery of “darkness” is a frequent one in the Bible (e.g., Prov7:7-9; Jn12:46; Col1:10-13; 2:13; 1Pet2:9; 1Jn1:5). Sadly many people love the darkness (Jn3:19-21). They will not escape the wrath of God (e.g., 1Thess1:10; 5:3).</p>	<p>Respond: What is the significance of seeing Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as your forefathers?</p> <p>What other characteristics are associated with darkness?</p> <p>Read Mt24:42-44; 26:45 for other examples of being “awake.” Is our culture awake or asleep?</p>
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Pray: Pray for the ministry of Cookson Hills (a Christian Children’s home and mission New Life supports). Pray for God to reveal any aspects associated with “darkness” in your life. Pray for Brent McCrory – the preaching minister at New Life. Continue to pray for open doors to share God’s Word (Col4:2-6) and the boldness to do so.