

1 Thessalonians 4

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Tape # 8187
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Shall we turn now to 1 Thessalonians, chapter four?

In the last verse of chapter three, Paul said to the end that we may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all the saints. The idea or the fact that Jesus is coming again should be an incentive for us to live holy, righteous lives. We don't know when the Lord is coming. We do believe that He is coming soon! But that belief in the fact that Jesus is coming again should inspire us and should be an incentive for us to live holy lives.

So verse one of chapter four, is really sort of tied with verse thirteen of chapter three as he goes on to say, *Furthermore* (That is, in light of the fact that the Lord is coming soon) *then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus*, Now quite often, Paul beseeches. That's sort of, I beg you. I beseech you, therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, present your bodies, he said in Romans 12:1. Now, not only beseeching, but exhorting them by the Lord Jesus!

that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. (In a life of holiness.)

Now, I think that often, a great mistake is made in our endeavor to determine how close we can live to the world and still be a Christian. What things can I engage in? Worldly things and still be a child of God? Not, you know, be alienated from the Lord. How close can I live to the world and still walk with the Lord? And is it right then for a Christian to do this? And these people so often are wanting us to set the guidelines of what is right and what is wrong, what is sinful, what is not sinful. And they are wanting to live on the edge. I don't believe that the real issue is trying to drive a fine line between what is right and what is wrong for me to do. I don't think that that is the real issue. I think the real issue is, does it please the Lord? And that should be the basis upon which we judge what we are doing. Does this please God? Would God be pleased with me doing this? Would I want to be doing this when Jesus comes again for the church?

Now, when I grew up. I grew up in a very strict regimen. The church that I was in was opposed to a lot of things. Of course, I sort of look back and I thank God! I was not exposed to a lot of junk in the world, because our church sort of had prohibitions against it.

I'll never forget the first night I succumbed to the peer pressure. I was in high school and I went to a movie. We had been taught that movies were sinful. Now the movie I went to wasn't really, well, it was extremely tame according to the standards that they have today. I mean, it was the "Stars and Stripes Forever". It was sort of a military kind of a movie, you know, of patriotism to the United States and all. But oh, I'll tell you the conviction I felt as I sat there in the theatre. It was the Broadway theatre here in Santa Ana. I still remember where I was sitting in the balcony. I really didn't enjoy the film at all because I was certain that the Lord might come and I didn't want to be there when the Lord came.

So that's the whole thing! Is it pleasing to God? And that should be what concerns me. Will God be pleased in my doing this? Jesus said, I do always those things that please the Father. I think that's a great standard. And if I can do those things that please the Father. And that's my desire and my purpose only to do those things that please the Father, I really don't have to worry.

Our chief desire should be to please God. In Revelation, chapter four, in the heavenly scene, as the cherubim are worshipping God as they declare His eternal character and nature, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which is, which was, which is to come, the eternal nature of God and the holiness of God. As they are declaring that, the twenty-four elders respond and they say, Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor and power, because Thou hast created all things and for your good pleasure they are and were created. You were created for God's good pleasure. And thus the prime concern of our lives should be, am I pleasing God? Does my life please Him? In as much as that is my purpose for existence, that should be my primary concern, pleasing God in all things. And so Paul is writing to them, how they ought to walk now as

believers. Walking in a way that will be pleasing to God so that you might abound, become richer and richer in your relationship with God and in your Christian experience.

²*For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.* So he is reminding them, how that when he was with them, how he commanded them how they were to live holy lives.

He goes on now to say, ³*For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:* Your sanctification, this is God's desire that you be holy, that you live a holy life. God said, be ye holy for I am holy, saith the Lord.

The word sanctification, is sort of an Old Testament word. It was a word that was used especially as regards to the vessel that was used in the worship of God in the tabernacle. These vessels were to be sanctified, wholly unto God. That is, they were not to be used for any other purpose. They were to be used exclusively for God! They weren't to be used for any common purpose. You shouldn't take one of the vessels from the temple, for instance, and take it down and gather water from the spring in that vessel. That vessel was set apart solely and completely for service to God. So when it talks about our being sanctified, it means that our lives be set apart, totally, completely for the service of God, that we should live for Him! And as we said, our primary desire is to live to please Him!

Now the first thing that Paul speaks as a prohibition, is that of fornication. Abstain from fornication.

⁴*That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;* You have to realize the background to Paul's writing to the Thessalonians. It was a completely immoral world at that time.

The Romans for the first five hundred and twenty years of the republic did not have a single divorce! But once the Roman republic had become the Roman Empire, divorce became so very, very common. In fact they spoke of women who would change husbands every year. It was just a very common thing to divorce and to marry someone else. When you read of the Roman Empire, you read of the moral decay.

In fact, Givens in his "Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire", actually declares that Rome was not conquered from without but was destroyed from within because the moral planks became so rotten that the nation just crumbled.

The Bible does say that righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people. And when you read the "Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire", by Givens, as he lists for you the five reasons why Rome fell, it's sort of frightening to realize that it looks like you are reading a newspaper today. Those same five conditions that perpetrated the fall of Rome are so common in our country today--the loss of family values, the high rate of divorce. And as he goes down and lists these things, we see that these are the things that we are facing today as social problems in America.

But the Greeks, perhaps even worse. Thessalonica was a part of Macedonia, a part of Greece. Demosthenes said, we keep prostitutes for our pleasure, mistresses for daily needs of our bodies, and wives for the begetting of our legitimate children and the faithful guardianship of our home. And so as far as the Greeks were concerned, as long as a man supported his family, he was considered a moral man, you know. He supports his family. There was no shame or taboo about extramarital relationships.

So these people growing up in Thessalonica grew up in that kind of a culture. The mores of that culture were so open to sexual promiscuity, that the gospel with its message of purity, holiness and faithfulness in marriage and all, was just really something that was totally foreign in the minds of the people. That was true even with the Jews in those days. The law of divorce was a little stricter but under the law it said if a man finds any uncleanness in his wife, let him give her a writing of a bill of divorcement. Now that word uncleanness is also translated as shame--if a man finds any shame in his wife.

Now there were two schools of thought, by the rabbis. There were those rabbis that said uncleanness constitutes sexual impurity. If she is sexually impure, commits adultery, then that is grounds for the divorce. He should give her a writing of divorcement.

There was another school of rabbis that said uncleanness was, well among other things, if she put too much salt on his food for dinner, that was uncleanness. He could divorce her for making a bad meal. If she went out into public with her head uncovered, that was grounds for divorce. If she was talking with men in the street, that was cause for divorce. Or speaking disrespectfully of her husband's parents, in his hearing,

was cause for divorce. Or if she was a brawling woman, she could divorce her. A brawling woman was defined as a woman whose voice could be heard in the next house.

Now with these two schools of thought, it's no wonder that the more liberal school of thought prevailed. Thus, even among the Jewish culture, divorce became common because of their liberal interpretation of finding a shame in his wife.

So Paul with that kind of an immoral background, is writing to them about purity, sexual purity. And living in holiness. And so the will of God is your sanctification that you should abstain from fornication, that you keep yourself for your wife or for your husband. That you be set apart and only for them. That everyone of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification—that is set apart and in honor.

Now the word, vessel, is interpreted by some as to be your wife, because you remember that Peter said, that husbands should honor their wives as the weaker vessel. And so when he said that we are possess our vessel, that is our wife, in sanctification and honor.

Some people say that the word vessel refers to our own body. They probably are both correct. You remember that Paul speaking about our bodies, declared we have this treasure in earthen vessels, talking about the glorious gospel that we have within us. So this treasure in these earthen vessels, referring to our bodies. But whether it be your wife or your own body, they are both correct, we should keep them sanctified. We should honor, you know, this body that God has given us and the relationships that we have within marriage. We should be true in those relationships.

⁵*Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:* You are not to live like the world. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. He that has the love of the world in his heart, has not the love of the Father.

The word, concupiscence, is the Greek word, *epithumia*, and it means a longing, especially for that which is forbidden. And there are many people who just seem to have a longing for forbidden things. They have an attraction towards evil. And so Paul is telling them, that's the way the Gentiles live. You shouldn't be living that way! You should be living a life that is set apart from the world. A life that is set apart for God and for the things of God. Not in the lust, or not desiring those things which are forbidden—not lusting after them like the Gentiles do. But they do it because they don't know God.

⁶*That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such,* So now he speaks about how often times people take advantage of other people. And in a context here of sanctity in marriage, there are those commentators who talk about, you should not try to flirt with or to be attracted to or seek to attract your brother's wife, that is defrauding your brother by trying to entice his wife. You should not go beyond the limits in this kind of a flirtation and all, but Paul says, nor in any matter. So we are not to try to defraud people in any manner.

And Paul gives the reason for this is that God is the avenger. God will get even. The Bible says, be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man sows that he shall also reap. And we know Him, the Book of Hebrews, who declares, "Vengeance is Mine. I will repay, saith the Lord!" And so God is the One who takes vengeance upon a person who is guilty of defrauding a brother.

The Lord is avenger of all such, *as we also have forewarned you and testified.* Now Paul is bringing them back into remembrance to the things that he taught them while he was there. And as you go through these things that Paul taught that he was there in Thessalonica, you wonder how he could have taught so much in just such a short period of time. He was not in Thessalonica very long before he had to leave. Yet he got in so much in his teaching in just that short period of time. But you know that he taught the essentials. These are basics. These are essentials to the Christian walk and to the Christian faith.

⁷*For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.* He has called us not to impure living, but God has called us to holy living.

⁸*He therefore that despiseth,* That is, the rules. You are actually despising God, because God is the One who made the rules. Quite often, I find people arguing with me as they seek to justify the things that they are doing. I'll just give them the Scriptures. They get angry with me. Well, I realize they are not really

angry with me, they are angry with God, with what God has commanded us!

So if you despise the rules, you *despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit*. And that is in order that we might live holy lives. Oh God help us! God, help us to live in purity. May God cleanse our minds, our lives from any impure thoughts or desires, that we might desire the things of God, that we might desire a close walk with God, a fellowship with God. And what fellowship has light with darkness? What concourse has Christ with Belial? And so may God help us to live a holy life, a pure life.

Now Paul goes to another subject and that is the subject of brotherly love. ⁹*But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you:* Paul spoke earlier in the epistle of his rejoicing when he heard of their love and of their faith toward all men. So he said, you are doing all right in this area. I've heard of your love and so it's touching brotherly love.

You really don't need that I write to you *for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another*. Surely, isn't that one of the basics of the New Testament?

When the lawyer came to Jesus, asking what is the greatest commandment? Jesus said, thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, soul, mind and thy strength and thy neighbor as thyself. And in this is all the law and the prophets. In other words, it's all summed up in just loving God and in loving your neighbor. Loving your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus told his disciples, by this sign shall men know that you are my disciples, that you love one another. He told them to love one another even as He loved us. And even as the Father loved Him. So this is basic. You've taught of God, Paul said. This is just a part of God's basic law and purpose. To love God foremost and to love our neighbors as ourselves! You don't need any further laws. You don't need any further commandments. That's just capsulizes the whole thing. It's all in that, in our love towards one another.

So as touching brotherly love, you don't need that I write because yourselves know that you have been taught of God to love one another. ¹⁰*And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia:* You are faithful. Paul is commending them now. This is something that you have done.

but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; Love each other with a greater love! Let it increase more and more. Through this, you can't love too much!

¹¹*And that ye study to be quiet,* Now, in the church of Thessalonica, because they did believe that Jesus was going to return immediately, some people took advantage of that. They said, well, the Lord is coming right away. So we might as well drop out of college, or we might as well quit our jobs and just wait for the Lord to come. They became sponges, sponging off of those who were working. They became busy bodies, just going around and talking. They go from house to house, just gossiping and talking.

So Paul said, study to be quiet, *and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;* We should not seek to live off of others. We should provide for ourselves.

Now in his second letter to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 3:10), evidently this continued to be a problem so Paul said, if a person doesn't work, they shouldn't eat. In other words, don't feed them! When they get hungry enough they will find a job. And so that was, you know, if a person is truly looking for work or there is some inability to keep them from working, yes, then, we should reach out in charity and in love to help them.

But if they are just lazy and they are just trying to live off of others, and there are a lot of people who are that way. They're just plain lazy. They don't deserve to be supported by the church or by their friends. But they will live off of friends so long. And that's not right! Paul said that we should work, not only that we might provide for ourselves but that we might have enough to share with others. That is a great motive for working.

So, study to be quiet. Don't become busy bodies, just going around, meddling with everybody's business. Mind your own business and work with your own hands, just like we commanded you; ¹²*That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without,* (Outside of the church. Those that are without.) *and that ye may have lack of nothing.* Provide for yourselves, for your family, so that you won't have a lack.

Now he turns to the final subject of chapter four, and that's the subject of their loved ones who had died and what their state was. ¹³*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are*

asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. Now, the term sleep is a term that was used in the New Testament to refer to a person's dying.

It probably began with Jesus when He and the disciples were down at the Jordan River. Word came from Mary and Martha that Lazarus was very sick. Come quickly! And Jesus stayed down there at the Jordan River for a couple of days before beginning his two day journey to Bethany to the home of Lazarus. But while He was there He was taking to them about Lazarus. Well, they were probably saying, Lord, you know, if You are going to go, I mean You've got this message and all. But He just sort of passed it off. Finally, He said, well Lazarus is asleep. I'm glad for your sake that I wasn't there. One of the disciples said, well, if he is sleeping, he is probably getting better. No, He said, Lazarus is dead, He plainly told them.

But He used the term, sleep, because what happens to a child of God is not what happens to a sinner who dies. Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. And he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And if you live and believe in Me, you will never die.

Now what did He mean? Because obviously millions of people have lived and believed in Jesus and have died. You can go to any cemetery and read the tombstones and you can see the little messages of faith. Over in Fairhaven in Santa Ana, there is one of the places where my mother is buried. We have on her little grave marker there—Jesus never fails, because that was sort of her theme as we were growing up. Jesus never fails. But her grave is there and she walked with Jesus.

What did Jesus mean if you live and believe in Me you will never die. The Bible has two definitions for death. The first definition for death is the separation of a man's spirit from his body. The term is used in the Bible, and he gave up the ghost, or he gave up the spirit. There came a separation of his conscienceness from his body.

That is used today as a definition for death. When a person is in a terminal state, has lapsed into a coma, has been placed on life support systems, they connect an EEG probe. And they watch the brain wave activity as it is monitored on the little graph by the bouncing needle. And as long as that needle is bouncing, they know that the brain is still functioning, though the person is in a coma. But when that line goes flat, then they remove the life support system and they say they are dead—clinically dead. There's no more brain activity, and so the life support system is removed. A Biblical definition of death, is the separation of a man's conscienceness from his body.

Obviously, that is not the definition that Jesus is thinking about when He said, if you live and believe in Me, you will never die! And I am glad for that! I would hate to think that I would have to continue for the next one hundred years in this body! Even the next twenty-five years in this body! This body is no longer of doing the things that it was once capable of doing. I find myself walking more carefully. I don't jump off of walls. I carefully let myself down. I mean, the body just isn't what it was. I am not the man I used to be and I never was, but I was more than I am now! Downhill! I'm with Paul. We who are in these bodies do often groan, earnestly desiring to be delivered, not to be unembodied, but to be clothed upon with a body which is from heaven. So I'm looking forward to that experience! And I'm glad that Jesus didn't mean that I would have to live forever in this body, that is going to pieces.

There is the second definition for death in the Bible. That is the separation of a man's conscienceness from God.

And you, Paul said, has He made alive who were dead in your trespasses and sins. Paul said if a woman is living only for pleasure, she is dead while she is still alive.

Jesus said, that you've got to be born again! There's got to be a Spiritual birth! And when Jesus said, that He who believes in Me, shall never die, He is making reference to Spiritual death, which is the separation of your conscienceness from God. He is saying that you will never be consciously separated from God!

When our spirit leaves these bodies, Paul said, that we know that when this earthly tent, talking about this body, is dissolved, when it goes back to dust, we have a building of God, that's not made hands, that's eternal in the heavens! This body isn't eternal. This body is in the process of decay. The catabolic forces are at work. And it's in the process of decay.

But I have another body! It's a building of God. It isn't a building of my ancestry. I don't have the DNA and the genetic factors that are built in that have been passed on to me. But I have another body that comes

directly from God! A body that will not wear out, that can not know weakness or pain, that cannot know and does not know any kind of infirmity—this building of God not made with hands. And it doesn't wear out. It's eternal in the heavens. And that is why we who are in these bodies, as we begin to experience the result of the catabolic forces begin to groan and travail earnestly desiring to be free, not to be unclothed but to be clothed upon with a body which is from heaven. For we know that as long as we are still living in these bodies, we are absent from the Lord. But we would chose rather that we would be absent from these bodies that we might be present with the Lord.

Thus, Jesus said, if you live and believe in Me you will never die, that is you will never be consciously separated from God. And death is only a shadow that crosses your path as you are walking to the Father's house. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou are with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. And surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And what then? I shall dwell in the house of the Lord, forever!

So one day my path is going to take a turn into the valley. In that valley there will be a shadow that crosses the path. He will take me by the hand and take me beyond the shadow. You can't have a shadow though without light. He takes me into the light of My Father's house, where I am going to dwell forever, in my Father's house.

So Paul said, I wouldn't have you to be ignorant concerning those which are asleep, a term used for the believers because Jesus said if you live and believe in Me, you will never die. So, they say, well, he's died! That isn't really quite correct. He moved! He moved from the tent into a mansion. What's so bad about that? He moved from a worn out tent. A moth-eaten tent, it couldn't hold off the rain anymore. But he is living now in a beautiful new mansion, a building of God.

So you see, it didn't quite add up to say, well, he died. So they say, well, he went to sleep. Asleep in Jesus, that is just a term to separate us from what happens to the sinner. The sinner dies! He actually was dead before he died, because living in sin, you are dead! (John 3:36) He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life! He that believeth not on the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him .

So without Christ you are already dead, twice dead! So it's just to separate the believer from the unbeliever—a term of sleep. But Paul is saying, I don't want you to sorrow with those who have no hope.

Now Paul has taught them that Jesus was coming back and was going to establish the kingdom of God upon the earth. It was going to be glorious, because when Jesus comes again the earth is going to just be filled with righteousness, with joy, with peace. We're going to live in a perfect environment. And it's going to be absolutely beautiful! There will be no pain. There will be no wars. There will be no crime. It's going to be just an ideal, beautiful, earth just to enjoy. And he was telling them about how glorious it will be when Jesus comes again and establishes the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

Well, some of the people had died before Jesus returned. You see, they were expecting Him to come back at any time. And when some of the died before Jesus returned, they had the mistaken notion that they missed out on this wonderful kingdom age! What a tragedy! Poor old Joe, we loved that guy! But yet he's not going to be able to live now in the kingdom, you know, when Jesus comes and we will have this glorious time. Oh, I looked forward to having such a great time with Joe and all, oh wow, what a shame you know, he died before it happened. And so they were sorrowing like the world sorrows at death when there is no hope.

What a tragic thing it is for a person to die without Christ, because there is no hope! There are no words of comfort that you can give. It is a tragic, horrible thing to die without Christ! There is such a hopelessness. But for a person who is a believer, for them there is such a wonderful hope! And so Paul is saying, I don't want you to be ignorant of how things are working because I don't want you to sorrow like those who have no hope.

¹⁴*For if we believe (Which we do!) that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.* Now notice those that are asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. The indication, of course, is that they are with Him now and when He comes for us, that God will bring them with Him.

Paul said that I'm in a strait between two. I have mixed feelings. I have sort of mixed emotions because I have a desire to depart from this world that I might be with Christ, which is far better. Yet, I don't feel that my job is done yet. I feel that you still need me to be your father and instructor in the faith. And so I feel pulled because I love you and I love the opportunity of instructing you in the things of the faith. And so I'm pulled in this. I want to be with you in order that I might minister to you but, oh, I'd sure love to be with the Lord! That's so much better! So I find myself, he said, caught in this feeling of mixed emotions. Now, notice that he didn't say I am in a strait betwixt two having a desire to die and sort of be in limbo for a thousand years or so. No, my desire is to die and to be with Christ, which is far better!

When Stephen was being stoned, he said, I see the heavens open and the Son of Man is there standing at the right hand of the Father. I believe that He was standing there ready to receive Stephen. In fact, he said, Jesus, receive my spirit. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

So, our loved ones, I believe, are presently with the Lord, consciously present with the Lord in ecstatic joy and glory there with the Lord! And there, waiting for the Lord to complete the number who are to be saved. And waiting anxiously for that coming again of Jesus to establish God's Kingdom upon the earth.

Now those that are asleep in Christ, we believe that God will bring with Him. ¹⁵*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, (In other word, this is by revelation from Jesus.) that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep.*

They have preceded us into glory. We make reference though they've gone on ahead of us, right! They've gone on before us. They've already entered in to the glorious beautiful heavenly scene.

My dad, my brother, my mother, they are waiting! One day we are going to have a great reunion! I can hardly wait for that to take place. My brother was the kind who knew everything, got into everything. I'm sure he'll be able to show me all the nooks and crannies that other people don't discover up there. We won't precede them. The word "prevent" there in your King James version, literally, is in the Greek, we won't precede them. They've preceded us.

¹⁶*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God:* Now the shout of the Lord will be like the voice of the archangel. And the shout will be as the trumpet, sounding sort of like a trumpet.

There are Scriptures, well Revelation 1:10, John said I heard a voice as of a great trumpet, saying unto me, I'm the Alpha and the Omega, and the beginning and the end. And I turned to see the voice, which spoke to me. And he said he saw Jesus Christ. And so the voice of Jesus is as a trumpet.

In Revelation 4:1, John said, I heard a voice as of a trumpet saying unto me. I saw a door open in heaven. There was a voice as of a trumpet, saying unto me, come up hither and I will show you things that are going to take place in the future. And John said, immediately he was taken by the Spirit into the heavenly scene, which he describes for us in chapter four. Plus he describes the worship in the heavenly scene.

In chapter five, he describes for us the sort of legal transaction that takes place when the time of the redemption of the world has come. The scroll is brought forth with the seven seals and the announcement made, who is worthy to take the scroll and loose the seals? And when no one is found worthy, John begins to sob until the elder says don't weep John, behold the lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to take the scroll and to loose the seals, the title deed of the earth. Who is worthy to redeem the earth? No man is able. No man was found worthy but Jesus Christ stepped forth. And as He does, they brought forth the golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying worthy is the lamb to take the scroll and loose the seals for He was slain. He has redeemed us by His blood, out of every nation, tribe, tongue and people. And He has made us unto our God, kings and priest. And we shall reign with Him on the earth!

Who can sing that song? Only the church, that's the song of the church.

Then where is the church? Right there in heaven observing this glorious scene. The church was raptured in chapter four, verse one. The voice of as of His trumpet, saying, come up hither. So Jesus is coming with a shout, the voice like the arch-angel. The voice like of a trumpet and the shout, Jesus will be saying, come up hither! Come on up!

You know we've often said that when Jesus did come to the tomb of Lazarus, finally He said, roll back the

stone. And they objected. And Jesus said to roll it back. When they did, He said, Lazarus, come forth! It's a good thing He said, Lazarus, come forth or the whole graveyard would have emptied. Jesus is going to call us all. Come on up! Oh, wooh! We'll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air!

So the voice of the archangel, the trump of God *and the dead in Christ shall rise first*: In the order of events, they have risen first. We are not going to precede them.

¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain (here on the earth) shall be caught up The Greek word is *harpazo*. And the word means to be snatched away or taken away by force. It is a word that is used in the classic Greek of a general who takes hostages by force.

It is used in the New Testament as translated at times, by force. When Paul midst of the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and they were sort of tearing him apart, a big tumult, the captain of the Roman Guard sent the soldiers in to rescue Paul and to take him by force from the mob. The word, there, by force, is the Greek word, *harpazo*, the same word, caught up, by force. That is taken away by the power, by force. And we will be taken away by the force of God's Spirit at the call of Jesus.

We'll be caught up *with them* (Together with our loved ones.) *in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord*. This is not the second coming of Jesus! We meet Him at this time in the air. He is coming for His church prior to His coming back at His second coming with His church.

There will be a period of time in which we will be with the Lord in heaven. Revelation four, five, and eighteen and nineteen. They sort of describe for us the heavenly scene as we are with the Lord in heaven. But then the Lord comes back to the earth in His second coming, then we will be coming with Him.

When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.

Enoch said, behold, He cometh with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon the earth. So we will be coming back with Jesus, when He comes back to reign over the earth in the glorious Kingdom age. We will be returning with Him at that time.

But prior to that, we'll be caught up and we will be with the Lord in heaven in that exciting heavenly scene. As we see all of these transactions and the transfer of the earth back over unto Jesus, the rightful ruler over the earth. And He comes in chapter ten of the Book of Revelation, with the scroll that is now open, the title deed. And He lays one foot upon the sea and one upon the earth. He declares there is not going to be any more delay. And the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Messiah. And so glorious days, but it's important that you distinguish between the rapture of the church, which is spoken of here and the second coming.

Concerning the rapture of the church in First Corinthians 15:51, Paul said, behold I show you a mystery. We will not all sleep. That is, not all of the Christians are going to die. But we will all be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. For this corruption must put on incorruption, this mortal must put on immortality.

There will come a moment of time when all of us at once will be changed. When Jesus has come up hither, flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven and thus we will receive our new bodies. We will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air to ever be with the Lord! When He is in heaven, we will be in heaven. When He comes back to the earth, we'll come back and reign with Him for a thousand years upon the earth. We will ever be with the Lord, wherever He is, there's where we will be!! And that's the glorious part of heaven, being with our Lord forever as He is revealing unto us the exceeding riches of his love and his grace towards us in Christ Jesus.

Paul says, ¹⁸Wherefore comfort one another with these words. In other words, those in sorrow and grieving over their loved ones, comfort them with these words. We are going to see them again! We are going to meet them, soon, when the Lord comes for us, snatches us up. And we will share the Kingdom with them. We will all be together in the glorious Kingdom Age. (Romans 14:17) For the Kingdom of God is not meat nor drink but it is righteousness and peace and joy! And we will be in the presence of the Lord and in His presence there is fullness of joy and in His right hand, there are pleasures for evermore.

Now what a foolish thing to give up the hope of the eternal glory and pleasures and joy with Jesus for a few moments of pleasure here on this earth. It doesn't make sense!

God said, come now let's reason together, saith the Lord. And He talked about how unreasonable they

were. He said they don't consider. They don't stop to think of the consequences or the possible consequences of a life of sin.

They are not considering. And how tragic that so many people don't consider what are the consequences of sin. Those who are involved in illicit, sexual relationships. They don't consider the possible consequences of those relationships. There are many, many, some twenty-one, social diseases that are now being transmitted through sexual relationships. They don't stop to consider the damage. And just for a few moments of pleasure, giving up the eternal pleasure of glory. It doesn't make sense.

So Paul said comfort one another with these words. Encourage one another! Get your mind on the eternal glories, that God has for those who walk in fellowship with Him. Jesus said, you want to come after me, deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow Me.

To the rich, young, ruler, He said, come and follow Me and you will have great reward in heaven. But he was more interested in the reward or in the riches he had here on the earth. He wasn't willing to deny himself. And so are you.

Paul is saying, now look, live a holy life. Live a life of purity. Deny the desires of the flesh, those evil desires of your flesh. Deny those! Take up your cross. Follow Jesus! And you will have reward in heaven, the reward of God's eternal Kingdom, the Kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy.

Father, we thank You for the hope that we have. The hope of the calling. You have called us to be Your children. You've called us to walk as Your children. You have called us to live of holiness and purity, set apart, Lord, for You. And may we, indeed, Lord, live a life of separation from the world. Help us. And Lord how we look forward to that wonderful day when we hear the shout. The voice that calls us to come up thither. When we are caught up by Your Spirit into Your presence and dwell forever in the glory, the wonder, the beauty of the things that You've prepared for those that love You. So Lord, sustain us. Challenge us to holy living. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.