

Sermon Title: **Our Final Days**

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Vessel: Russ LaFlamme

Scripture Reference: **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

Thesis: **Paul wants the Church of Jesus Christ to be educated about what to expect in the last days;**

Purpose: **Today, we will learn about what we can expect in our future with Jesus.**

Key Word: "Christ's Return"

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** (*Black 204 - Red 250*)

A) The Setting:

- 1) **This message continues with the teachings which shape my own beliefs.**
 - (a) And this message has to deal with our Final Days.
 - (b) What final days are we talking about you may ask?
- 2) **Are we talking about the end of the earth or the end of our time on this earth?**
 - (a) What do you believe will happen when you come to your final days?
 - (b) This is an important question; because, what you believe about the end of your existence shapes your attitudes now.
- 3) **Are you looking forward to the new life we have been promised with excitement?**
 - (a) Or dread?
 - (b) With fear?
 - (c) Or Faith?
- 4) **When Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica they had only begun the work of establishing the church there for a few weeks before being run out of town.**
 - (a) Now others were spreading false teachings and persecuting the new Christians.
 - (b) Questions concerning the coming of the Lord and what happens to loved ones when they die persisted.
- 5) **Recognizing that people need comfort and guidance,**
 - (a) Paul wanted to encourage the new believers both in the hope of their faith and the return coming of the Lord.
 - (b) For Paul knew that what people believe about these important truths will encourage them towards holy living.
- 6) **So, let's see what Paul had to say in our scripture reading for today in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.**

B) *Sermon Prayer*

II) The hook:

A) **We all like to receive an encouraging word.**

- 1) We want to know that we are on the right path; going the right way; doing well even though we are just learning.
- 2) I don't know anyone who doesn't like to be encouraged; especially when there is uncertainty.
- 3) They want to know that God has not forgotten them especially during times of crisis and loss.
- 4) **Paul's exhortation was meant to encourage the Christians who had loved ones who had died.**
 - (a) The passage of scripture that we just read is one that is often used to comfort the grieving at a memorial service or a committal service.
 - (b) For it encourages us that this is not the end;
 - (c) That we will one day see our loved ones again.
 - (d) And that we can look forward to the day of our reunion.
- 5) **But Paul refers to two ways our days can end in this life.**

- (a) So, let's take a brief look at what he is talking about and see how it can encourage us.
- (b) Also, what we can learn about what we can expect in our future with Jesus.

TS: **So we begin with a look at . . .**

III) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **Our Final Days before the Lord Returns**

- 1) **In Matthew's gospel in Chapter 24 Jesus was asked about the coming of the end of the age.**
- 2) Jesus gives several signs that the end of the age is near.
- 3) Jesus warns of many false messiahs claiming to be their savior.
- 4) Beware lest they lead you astray.
- 5) There will be wars and rumors of wars.
- 6) Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.
- 7) There has certainly never been as much war going on in the world as has been in the last century.
- 8) Earthquakes and famine will be on the rise in various places and these are just the beginning.
- 9) The disciples will experience increased persecution and even be put to death.
- 10) This too has been on the rise.
- 11) Many will fall away and betray one another and hate will be at an all-time high.
- 12) Sounds like the headlines of our newspapers!
- 13) But Jesus warns that the real sign that the end is near is when you see the desolation sacrilege standing in the Holy place as spoken of by the prophet Daniel.
- 14) This is the time where the Antichrist will stand in the Temple of Jerusalem and declare himself a god to be worshiped.
- 15) This will signal that we are only three and a half years from the return of Jesus to set up His kingdom on earth which He will rule for a thousand years.
- 16) But it will also be a time of great tribulation for those who remain on the earth during that time.
- 17) At this time the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from heaven.
- 18) There will be great mourning and suffering.
- 19) But Jesus reminds His disciples that while they can recognize the time or season is near; that no one knows the exact time except for the Father in Heaven. (Matthew 24:36)
- 20) The time of God's grace will be over and the time of judgement will be upon the earth.
- 21) The good news is that Paul is reminding the church that they will not be present for this great time of tribulation.
- 22) That the Lord will descend and with a LOUD SHOUT and the Trumpet call of GOD, the dead in Christ will be the first to rise to meet the Lord in the air.
- 23) Then, those who are in Christ who remain alive will be caught up to meet our Lord and be removed from the earth for a time.

TS: **This is why Paul wants us to know about . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **Our Final Days Before Facing Death**

- 1) **You see when facing our final days, many people have questions about what is going to happen.**
 - (a) Others don't want to think about it and they are often the most fearful about facing the end of their existence.
 - (b) But Paul wanted the Thessalonian Christians to be certain of what they could expect and because of his letter to them we too have the answer.

- 2) **Paul says in verse 13 that he does not want you to be uninformed.**
 - (a) The King James version says, I don't want you to be ignorant concerning those who have fallen asleep.
 - (b) Paul is using another metaphor of sleep to describe death.
- 3) **Jesus referred to death as having fallen asleep when he spoke of his friend Lazarus in John 11:11.**
 - (a) Sleep is an excellent metaphor to describe death because when you sleep you wake up again.
 - (b) Jesus wanted to convey that death is not the end of the story of our existence . . . for we will wake up on the other side of this life into the next one.
- 4) **All of us must face death at some point in our lives.**
 - (a) Either our own or of someone we love.
 - (b) Death is 100% fatal.
 - (c) Even those who have been raised from their death had to face it once again.
- 5) **And while death brings grief and anger, and loneliness for many in this world;**
 - (a) Death for a Christian also brings hope, expectation and longing to be near God and other loved ones.
 - (b) This is what encourages us as Christians for we have been given hope of a new and better life to come.
- 6) **When we are young we know very few if any in heaven;**
 - (a) But as we grow older we begin to see that we have more close friends and family who have passed through death's door.
 - (b) When we reach Heaven we will be greeted by all of our loved ones who have gone on before.
- 7) **A door is another great metaphor to describe death**
 - (a) Because I believe it is not the end of our existence; but our birth into a new existence.
 - (b) One where we will close our eyes in this life and open them to a bright new world where we will find our Lord.
- 8) Hymn Story: *Precious Lord, Take My Hand* by Thomas Dorsey¹
Thomas Dorsey was a black jazz musician from Atlanta who was known in the early 1920's for the suggestive lyrics he combined with original music. Then God touched his life and in 1926 he gave up the suggestive music and began to write spiritual music. **In 1932 times were hard for Dorsey as they were for nearly everyone trying to survive the depression.** Perhaps it was because of his past music and also his musical style some said his music was too worldly. **The most difficult night of his life came one night while he was in St. Louis; Dorsey received a telegram telling him that his pregnant wife had suddenly died.** Tom was filled with grief and his faith was shaken, but instead of wallowing in self-pity, he expressed his agony the only way he knew how. He wrote this song. . .

*Precious Lord, take my hand,
 Lead me on, let me stand.
 I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
 Through the storm, through the night,
 Lead me on to the light;
 Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home.*
- 9) Dorsey found comfort in looking forward to the day that Jesus would take him by the hand and lead him home.

TS: **So, . . .**

IV) Conclusion (Life Application)

¹ From a sermon by Darryl Womack, Jehovah – Shammah, 11/1/2009, sermoncentral.com

A) **Does it really matter how we get there?**

- 1) Whether we are called from the grave or caught up to meet them in the air, the destination is the same.
- 2) The result is the same; we who are of Christ will be with Him forever.
- 3) No, I don't think it matters whether we are first or last; we get to be with Jesus.

B) **So, given all that, this is the summary of what I believe:**

- 1) I believe that we are currently in the age of grace where God is patiently waiting for all who will find Salvation through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.
- 2) I believe that the church is the bride of Christ called for the work of fulfilling the great commission of **Matthew 28:18-20**, which is taking the good news of God's gift of salvation to the whole world while it awaits the return of the Bridegroom.
- 3) I believe that Jesus, will one day come to carry away the church body to be with Him.
- 4) I also believe that nothing else prophetically must happen before Christ returns to claim His bride.
- 5) **I believe that this will lead to the last seven-year period of tribulation before Christ returns to establish His thousand-year kingdom on Earth.**
 - (a) I believe that at the end of the millennial kingdom period there will be one final rebellion where Jesus will once and for all put down Satan and his followers and cast them into the lake of fire.
 - (b) I believe that at this time the old Heaven and Earth, tainted by sin, will be purified by fire, cleansed to make a new eternal Heaven and Earth; providing a place where we will live forever with God! (**2 Peter 3:7**)
- 6) **I believe this is where we will continue to worship, work, and serve God for His Glory as we were created to do, forever and ever.**
- 7) **Finally, I believe this is a doctrine of encouragement; not idleness.**
 - (a) It is a reminder that we need to make sure we have made our final arrangements before it is too late to enter through the door of Grace which is Jesus our Lord.
 - (b) Jesus said "***I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Me***". (**John 14:6**)
 - (c) Therefore, out of gratitude we should be living examples of the Great commandment to Love God with all our hearts, souls and minds as well as loving our neighbors as ourselves.
 - (d) We should be sharing the good news carrying out the great commission of making disciples, teaching them to obey the teachings of Christ.
- 8) **I trust that you know Jesus as your Savior, Lord and King.**
 - (a) If not, I invite you to ask Jesus to come into your heart right now.
 - (b) Admit that you need a Savior and let Jesus be your Lord.
 - (c) He will send His Holy Spirit and will begin the transformation of preparing you for the next life.

V) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**