

1 Thessalonians 4

Read 1 Thessalonians 4

“We move now into the second half of the letter dealing with the practical instructions for these new believers in Christ. The key word is “walk” (4:1, 12), and Paul beseeches them to obey the Word (4:1, 10, 12, 14). The Christian’s behavior is compared to a walk for several reasons: (1) it demands life, for the dead sinner cannot walk; (2) it requires growth, for a little baby cannot walk; (3) it requires liberty, for someone who is bound cannot walk; (4) it demands light, for no one wants to walk in the dark; (5) it cannot be hidden, but is witnessed by all; and (6) it suggests progress toward a goal. Paul describes the kind of walk the believer should have.” Weirs

1. Walk in Holiness (4:1-8) - Read 1Cor.6:17-7:1.

- What does it mean to be separate?

- 1Cor.6:17 says “...And do not touch what is _____”.

- If we walk this way what promises does God make?

- Nothing defiles a person more than sexual sin. What steps can someone take to be pure? _____

(Discuss how much temptation exists today and how to have victory in this area rather than defeat.)

2. Walk in Love (4:9-10) - How are we taught to love by God? (see Romans 5:5) _____

Verse 9 tells us how we receive love and verse 10 says we should _____ it toward the brethren and to _____ more.

3. Walk in Honesty (4:11-12) - Discuss in your group what the Christian life should look like to those around you who are unbelievers.

- Fellow workers - _____
- Friends and relatives - _____

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- **Neighbors - _____**
(How should be seen as different in terms of honesty, taking commitments seriously, peace loving, confident, self-controlled).

Read and discuss.

4. Walk in Hope (4:13-18) - *“This is the classic passage on the rapture of the church. Sorrow had come to the lives of these saints, and they were wondering whether their dead fellow Christians would be left behind at the return of Christ. Paul assures them that their dead will be raised first, and that all the saints will be gathered together to meet Christ in the air. Do not confuse the rapture of the church (meeting Christ in the air) with the revelation of the Lord, that time when He comes with His saints to earth to judge sinners and to establish His kingdom (2 Thes. 1:7-12). The rapture (meeting Christ in the air) can take place at any time; but the revelation (returning with Christ) will occur some seven years after the rapture.”*

A. *The comfort that death for the believer is only sleep.*

“Sleep in Jesus” in v. 14 is literally “put to sleep through Jesus.”

Regardless of how a believer dies, Jesus Christ is there to put him to sleep. Of course, the soul goes to be with Christ (Phil. 1:20-24; 2 Cor. 5:6-8); it is the body that sleeps, not the soul. The word “cemetery” means “a sleeping place”; it is the place where the bodies sleep, awaiting the resurrection.

B. *The comfort of heavenly reunion.*

The hardest thing about death is separation from our loved ones; but when Christ comes, we will be “together with the Lord” forever. The living saints will not precede those who have died; all will be caught up together to meet Christ.

C. *The comfort of eternal blessing.*

We shall be “forever with the Lord.” We shall obtain new bodies (1 John 3:1-3; Phil. 3:20-21). Paul says that the body we place in the cemetery is like a seed awaiting the harvest (1 Cor. 15:35-58). Of course, the body turns to dust, and that dust becomes a part of the earth (Gen. 3:19). The Bible nowhere teaches that God raises and unites every particle of the believer’s body. What it does teach is that the resurrection body has identity with the body that was buried. Just as the seed that is planted (and that dies) in the ground has identity and continuity with the seed it produces, so the resurrection body will have identity and continuity with the body that was buried. Resurrection is not reconstruction.

The words “caught up” (v. 17) are full of meaning. They mean: (1) to catch away speedily, for there will be no warning (5:1-10); (2) to seize by force, for Satan will seek to hinder our rapture to heaven; (3) to claim for one’s self, just as the Bridegroom claims the bride; (4) to move to a

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new place; and (5) to rescue from danger, for the church will not go through the Tribulation (1:10; 5:9).