

November 16/17, 2024

"Hope in Grief"

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SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

2024 Challenge: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

November: Read Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

Day 1 [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#) | Hopeful Grief

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 1 Thessalonians 4:13

After Paul leaves Thessalonica, some of the believers there pass away. Those left behind wonder if their loved ones have missed out on Jesus's return. They didn't have a written record of Jesus's teachings yet. This letter is one of the earliest written New Testament Scriptures. So, Paul responds to their question with the truth that Christ will return, along with all those "who have fallen asleep in him" ([1 Thessalonians 4:14](#)). Paul's words encourage these believers. They are free to grieve, but they can do so with the hope of resurrection and eternal life. Their grief should look different than the culture around them, one that has no hope of heaven.

The hope that inspired these believers to endure loss and grief is the same hope that should inspire and encourage us today. Jesus is coming back! He will bring with him all "who have fallen asleep in him." We have the unshakable hope of seeing beloved believers again in the life to come. So, though grieving is normal and needed for processing loss, we can grieve without despair. We have unshakable hope in light of Christ's sure return.

TODAY: The holidays can be especially challenging for those who have lost loved ones. Paul concludes this section with the instruction to "encourage one another with these words" ([1 Thessalonians 4:18](#)). Think of a grieving person you know. Ask God how to encourage that person this season. Consider sending a thoughtful card, writing a note of encouragement or visiting.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Nehemiah 1-2](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note Nehemiah's heart for Jerusalem. Reflect on Jesus's heart for Jerusalem and his people ([Luke 19:41-44](#)).

Day 2 [1 Thessalonians 4:14](#) | A Defining Belief

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

In response to the Thessalonians' concern about deceased believers, Paul writes to them one of the first Christian creeds: "We believe that Jesus died and rose again." Elsewhere, Paul would write that "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" ([1 Corinthians 15:17](#)). Jesus's resurrection is, therefore, central to the good news of the gospel. It is like the firm foundation of a house upon which the rest is built. Paul makes plain that without this firm foundation, there is no Christian faith.

As Christians, we hold on to the same hope the Thessalonian believers did. Jesus is the "firstfruits" of the resurrection ([1 Corinthians 15:20](#)). Just as he was raised from the dead, we will be as well. This should give us

great hope and encouragement for how we live today. This truth also provides hope when friends or family who believe in Jesus die. With full confidence, we know we will see them again. Because Jesus lives, we can grieve with hope, knowing that the best is yet to come.

TODAY: Sometimes, the best way to celebrate a truth is to do so through song. Remember and celebrate the truth of Jesus's resurrection by singing with Ada Bible Worship, "[He Lives](#)." Praise God that "He is risen, he is risen he's alive...Jesus lives." Ask God to help you live with this hope today.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Nehemiah 3-4](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.

Day 3 [1 Thessalonians 4:15-17](#) | When He Returns

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 1 Thessalonians 4:16

Paul writes a heartfelt letter to his friends in Thessalonica. They are growing in the Lord, but they have questions and concerns about what will happen to their loved ones who died in the Lord. Paul encourages these believers—not only is Jesus coming back but the dead in Christ will rise first at his return. Then, believers who are living will join him, and all will be with the Lord forever ([1 Thessalonians 4:17](#)). It will be a homecoming celebration! It's a picture of a family reunited, together with Jesus.

This truth anchors our lives: Jesus is coming back. Discussions around Jesus's return can wander into speculation or curiosity around timelines and specific details. The major emphasis in Scripture, however, is the reality and sure hope that Jesus *is* coming back. We are to live each day with readiness and hopeful awareness that Jesus could come back at any moment. This reality should encourage and remind our hearts that this life is not all there is. We have a King who is coming back to establish his kingdom forever, and all believers will be with him. What a day of rejoicing that will be!

TODAY: Write a prayer of gratitude to God in your journal, thanking him for this reality and the hope we have in his return. Thank God that when Jesus returns, _____ (names of your beloved believers who have passed) will rise first. Then, we who are living will be with the Lord together.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Nehemiah 5-6](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Pay attention to Nehemiah's servant leadership. Consider how Jesus exemplifies servant leadership ([Mark 10:45](#)).

Day 4 [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#) | With Him

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:17

Paul reminds the Thessalonian believers of core Christian truths that are a source of hope and encouragement. He encourages them with the hope of Jesus's return and a reunion with their loved ones who have died in Christ. Paul also reminds them that when Christ returns, "we will be with the Lord forever" ([1 Thess. 4:17](#)). This is the pinnacle of all Christian hope. We will be *with Jesus forever*.

A number of things may excite us about heaven and the life to come. Maybe it's being completely free of sin, pain and sadness. Or, maybe it's reuniting with loved ones who have passed in the Lord. Each of these is a stellar source of hope and worthy of excitement. But there is one hope that should stand above the rest in our hearts: being with Jesus forever. Heaven would not be heaven if Jesus was not there. He is our highest hope and our heart's true treasure.

TODAY: Do you have this hope? Scripture teaches that sin separates us from God, but Jesus came to seek and save the lost ([Luke 19:10](#)). He lived perfectly, died sacrificially, and rose victoriously. All who turn from sin and trust in Jesus receive forgiveness and the hope of being with him forever. If you don't have this hope, today is the perfect time to turn to Jesus. Ask him to forgive your sin and tell him you believe in him. If you have turned to Jesus already, take a moment to praise God for this incredible gift.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Nehemiah 7](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.

Day 5 [1 Thessalonians](#) | Unshakable Faith

Therefore encourage one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:18

Paul spent a short stint in Thessalonica during his second missionary journey. This is when the church in Thessalonica was born. Later on, Paul writes a series of letters, including what we know as 1 Thessalonians, to encourage and uplift this young Jesus community. This band of believers was strong in the Lord but needed encouragement and instruction about core matters of faith. Throughout this letter, Paul anchors their hope in Christ and his return and further reminds them of how they are to live holy and pure lives—radically countercultural lives.

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians instructs us how to have an unshakable faith. As we learned throughout this sermon series, an unshakable faith doesn't mean a trouble-free life. Rather, amid uncertainty, pressure and temptation, we can stand firm in who God is and the gospel message. We discover that an unshakable faith can greatly influence our families and communities as others see us live out faith in Jesus in hard times. We are called to be contributors in the church, be open to correction and be for each other. We learn that unshakable faith includes a gospel-centered life that brings freedom of purpose and to love well. We see that God calls us to holy lives that are set apart from our culture, including in our sexuality. Unshakable faith also gives us hope in grief because of the sure return of Jesus and our eternity with him.

TODAY: (Re)read 1 Thessalonians with a highlighter or pen, and mark up phrases or words that stand out to you. This exercise should take about fifteen minutes. As you read, reflect on the markers of an unshakable life and ask God for the grace to become that sort of person. If you missed any sermons in this series, you can watch them [HERE](#).

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Nehemiah 8](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Focus on the public reading of God's Word. Consider how Jesus taught and fulfilled God's Word ([Luke 4:16-21](#)).