

A gentleman from the Bible by the name of Job, asks the question that everyone wants the answer to: *“If a person dies, will they live again?”* If a person dies, if you die, if I die, will we live again? Because of Adam and Eve’s nose-dive into sin in the Garden of Eden, death will eventually hunt us all down. That we know. Is there life after death? That’s what we want to know.

Any discussion about death and dying is always difficult because tears fill our eyes and loneliness fills our hearts. Death is not something we like to talk about, or even want to talk about. And, when it comes to things unpleasant, we avoid and ignore them. We can’t avoid and ignore death.

Since you and I will walk into the valley of the shadow of death, we have to talk about death. We need to talk about death. The best place to do that is here, in God’s House. The best way to do that is here, in God’s Word.

Another gentleman from the Bible by the name of Paul, answers Job’s question with an emphatic: *“Yes! There is life after death.”* And that’s the reason he says to us: **“Don’t Grieve Like the Rest!”** He’s absolutely right! **“We Don’t Grieve Like the Rest.”** We have hope and a future.

While the Christians in the congregation at Thessalonica remained anchored in their conviction about Christ even in the face of persecution, they were still struggling with some issues about death and Jesus’ return.

Their first issue revolved around Jesus’ promise to return at any time. They were so convinced of it, many quit their jobs, sold their possessions and spent their day waiting for Jesus to show up. Paul was glad they took Jesus’ promise to heart. But as Christians, they still had lives to lead and a purpose until Christ returned.

We too can commend the Thessalonians for fully expecting Jesus to return at any time. Do you believe that’s true? Or, have you pushed your Savior’s return down the road, or even off the road?

Jesus says the end will come like a thief in the night. We had better be prepared for him at any time.

Their second issue was something that really bothered them. They were worried that their Christian loved ones, who died before Jesus’ return, would miss out on the celebration of his glorious return.

Paul wants to help his Christian brothers and sisters work through that by telling them: **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.**

Paul’s not trying to sugar-coat death by calling it *“sleep.”* He’s using the same word Jesus used when speaking about his good friend Lazarus’ 4 days in the tomb. Death for anyone who believes in Christ is sleep. One day Christ will tap us on the shoulder and wake us up.

Being uninformed about some things can be embarrassing. Being uninformed about your eternal destination and how you get there is extremely dangerous for your soul.

Just like the Thessalonians, we want to know about our Christian loved ones who die before Jesus’ return?

- Will they miss out on any of the celebration?
- What about believers who are still alive when Jesus returns? Will they have an advantage over those who fell asleep?

The Lord doesn’t want us to be in the dark about anything that relates to our salvation. Paul isn’t saying that Christians shouldn’t grieve or don’t grieve. Funerals sting. We feel the loss for a long time. God had them play an important role in our lives. We still expect to see their face and hear their voice. We miss them. If we didn’t grieve or don’t grieve, then something’s wrong.

But there’s something different about our grieving. Paul says: **“We Don’t Grieve Like the Rest.”** HOPE

as the difference-maker in the grieving process. HOPE is what makes the Christian's grieving different. HOPE is found in these Christian truths: **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.** At the next Thessalonian funeral, they could comfort each other with these truths. And we can too.

What are your final two enemies? Death! Grave! In order to defeat your final two enemies, Jesus needed to successfully carry out God's rescue plan for salvation. It involved 2 steps.

- Step 1: Meet God's demands. Nothing short of perfection would count. Jesus was perfect for you, for all of us.
- Step 2: Endure God's punishment. Jesus endured hell, the torture of separation from God on the cross for you, for all of us.

Jesus' body was buried in a tomb on Good Friday just like our bodies will be buried. But that sealed tomb couldn't keep him locked up for more than 3 days. Jesus' Easter battle cry: **Because I live, you also will live,** assures us our grave can't keep us locked up either.

Remember their second issue? That their Christian loved ones who died before Jesus' return would miss out on Jesus' return. Paul removes those concerns: **According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.**

Whether a Christian dies before Jesus' return or whether a Christian is alive when Jesus returns there is no advantage. All will meet together and celebrate together in GLORY. Paul shares those details: **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. 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.**

Unlike Christmas, the first time Jesus' came, there won't be any confusion about whether the Lord has

come. His return will be **with a loud command, the voice of the archangel, the trumpet call of God.** Everyone's going to hear him ... even the dead.

He'll raise the body of every person, believer and unbeliever, from the grave. He only mentions the one group here because he's making his point ... living believers won't get a head start on the celebration before the sleeping believers. They'll party together.

What will Saints Triumphant be like? What will believers with soul and glorified body rejoined be like?

- No more colds, flus or allergies ... ever again.
- No more cancer, arthritis, diabetes or dialysis ... ever again.
- No more loss of vision, hearing or memory ... ever again.
- No more physical, emotional or mental pain ... ever again.
- No more separation from believing loved ones ... ever again.

That's the GLORY awaiting us. When we bury a loved one who falls asleep in the arms of Jesus, we'll see them again – body and soul.

We may not like to talk about death and dying, but Paul tells the Thessalonians and us we need to: **Therefore, encourage one another with these words.**

Do you wonder what to say to a fellow Christian at the funeral home or the cemetery? Do you wonder what to write in a sympathy card? We could say, *"I'm so sorry,"* or we could write, *"My deepest sympathies."* Unbelievers can do that. Wouldn't it more comforting to hear the simple truths that you know and believe about Jesus' death, resurrection and return visit?

- His death means he's forgiven every sin.
- His resurrection means he gives out personal wake-up calls.
- His return visit means it's a meet and greet with fellow believers. That's why: **"We Don't Grieve Like the Rest!"**