

Explore the Bible: April 10

Promised • I Thessalonians 4:13-18

By Cyndi Grace



Grace

I have always been drawn to the Scripture. As a young girl I clearly remember our pastor at First Baptist Church, Atwater, Calif., preaching on Hebrews 9:27 – “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment...” (KJV). I was about nine years old, but those words cemented in my mind; we all have an appointment to die.

Because of those words, the idea of death was settled and when I read about someone’s death, I immediately think they showed up for their appointment. However, that doesn’t make it easier on those left behind, believe me. I lost both of my parents six weeks apart when I was in my 30s. I grieved greatly. Since then I have lost other family members and close friends. I miss them terribly but amid the sorrow I know they met their appointments with God and I am comforted.

As my father was in his last days, we had some deep talks. I had been caring for him and my mother while leaving my children for weeks at a time. I was tired and a little discouraged. My daddy sensed that, took my hand, and said these words, “All that you are going through right now, one day, will just be a dream. Cyndi, all of this life is just a dream. It only becomes real when we wake up in heaven.”

He was not a theologian but what he told me that day could have been his interpretation of what the Apostle Paul was saying to the Thessalonians in our Scripture passage for this week: Death is not the end. It is our hope.

Paul had just encouraged the Thessalonians to live a sanctified life of faith. However, living like this with the opposition surrounding them was hard for the new Christians and they were becoming discouraged that Christ's second coming was taking so long. Also, after some had died there was confusion as to whether or not those would see Jesus.

Paul's words to them were: "For *if* we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the *same way*, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep" (v. 15 CSB). He reminded them of the Gospel and that a person must be in Christ for this to happen.

Many in grief believe that they will meet a loved one in heaven even though there was never a time that loved one accepted Jesus as his/her Savior. This should cause in us an urgency to share this Gospel. The truth is not everyone will rise again to be with God, no matter how good they were or the wonderful things they did.

Jesus is the only way. Paul made sure he made that clear.

He then mentioned the second coming of Christ. These two verses (16-17) have caused a great division of thought in theological circles. Are you Amillennialist? Post-millennialist? Pre-millennialist? However, Paul's intent was simple. Christ is coming back just as He said. That is the important thing. He encouraged believers that even though we do not know the day or time, it will be a glorious day for all believers, both those living and those who had gone before. This life is not the end of all things. That is our hope.

I love The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis. In the final book of the series, The Last Battle, we read of the death of

the main characters. Aslan, the Christ figure, meets them and says, "There was a real railway accident. Your father and mother and all of you are – as you used to call it in the Shadowlands – dead. The [school] term is over; the holidays have begun. The dream is ended; this is the morning."

It goes on to say, "They were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read; which goes on forever; in which every chapter is better than the one before."

We don't know when Jesus will come back but we know He will. We don't know when we will die, but we know we will. For those of us who follow Christ, there is hope beyond the grave that is more than we can ever imagine.

God has put eternity in our hearts, according to Ecclesiastes 3:11. So, hold on tightly. When we meet Him at our appointment we will understand this life was all a dream and now real life begins. Be encouraged by this reality.

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