



1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18 | The Best Sleep You'll Ever Have!

Sunday, November 16, 2014 – 3rd Sunday of End Time – Saints Triumphant

¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Sleep. Some people crave it. Some people wish they could get it. Some people joke about it. "I'll sleep when I'm dead..." In all seriousness, sleep is an essential part of a person's life. In fact, many studies have shown that sleep, or the lack of it, can affect blood pressure, cardiovascular problems, weight, mood, and concentration. Which is why having a correct understanding of sleep and what it does is so important for a person. Did you know that the average adult needs 8-10 hours of sleep at night to be fully productive the next day? Did you know that the average teenager should get 10-13 hours of sleep in order to operate at full capacity? Did you know that your grade schooler should be getting 12-15 hours of sleep in order to develop in a healthy way? Those are some staggering numbers. And they're numbers that, I'm sure, will cause some discussion later over coffee and donuts.

But we're not here this morning to talk about sleep...at least not in the sense that we've been talking this morning. No, Paul encourages the Thessalonians--and us--to not be ignorant about the sleep believers have in death. It's an appropriate analogy, isn't it? After all, we don't like talking about death, do we? In fact, we like to use what are called euphemisms to describe death. A euphemism is "the substitution of a mild, indirect, or vague expression for one thought to be offensive, harsh, or blunt." Often times in our culture, we use euphemisms for topics that we consider taboo, or not appropriate to speak of in public. These topics include, but are not limited to, bodily functions, sexual acts, and anything related to death. We use terms like "Deceased..." "Bit the bullet..." "Passed away or over..." "On vacation..." "Went to heaven..." "Went to a better place..." "Went home..." "Returned to the maker..." "Is with God..." "Went to be with the angels..." and hundreds more! But the funny thing is that we try--sometimes at all costs--to avoid the word death.

Why? Well, there can be plenty of reasons why we don't like talking about dying. It might make us feel sad or depressed because we might have lost a loved one to death. We don't like talking about dying because it usually dampens the mood in a room and causes the conversation to stop. We don't like talking about death because we don't really know what to say when someone loses a loved one to death. Maybe we don't like talking about death because of the uncertainty of how or where or when it will happen. But most of all, we don't like talking about death because it reminds us of our own mortality. It reminds us that we will all face it someday. And it reminds us of why we will face it.

Death is a reality for all of us. We can thank Adam and Eve for that. With their one decision to disobey and doubt God Adam and Eve brought death into this world. Because of their trespass and disobedience, they no longer deserved to live, but to die. And that same curse of death has passed from generation to generation right into your body today. There's no escaping it--each of us will die.

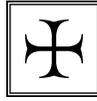
We can try to pass the buck. We can try to play the blame game. But you aren't any better than Adam or Eve. In fact, in a logical way you might be able to make the argument that you are even more at fault than they were. At that point in the world, sin was a novel concept, a new idea. Humans had never had to confront direct temptation like that before. And they were caught red-handed. Sin is by no means a novel idea today, is it? How many times have you promised your spouse that you would treat them better but found yourself resorting to the same old habits as you had before? How many times have you found yourself promising never to click on that website again, or look at the magazine, or go to that establishment, only to find yourself clicking the mouse, turning the page, or staring at the stage? How many times have you told yourself that you wouldn't cut corners at work but would work harder and better next time, only to find yourself back into the same lazy, apathetic lifestyle? How many times have you tried to convince yourself that you would try to make to worship more and try to be a part of the congregation's life on a more frequent basis only to find yourself laying in bed on a Sunday morning or neglecting the opportunities for Christian fellowship and fun?

It's sad, isn't it? How you can face the same sin over and over and over again only to find yourself succumbing to the same sin over and over and over again? And so it's true; we are not better--in fact, maybe worse!--than Adam and Eve. We deserve death. We know what we've earned. And that's why death is so hard to face. The Apostle Paul asked the quintessential question for the struggling Christian: "Who will save me from this body of death?"

But Paul doesn't leave us there. "Don't be ignorant about death," he says, "so that you don't grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope." You see, dear Christian, there is hope! Christian's don't have an unanswered question. "Who will save me from this body of death?" God will. God has! Don't be ignorant, dear Christian. Death in fact is just like sleeping! You would be considered foolish for questioning if you were going to actually wake up after a 20 minute nap. We're not talking because you overslept, or that the alarm didn't go off. We're talking an legitimate, conspiracy theorist, tin foil hat worry that you might not wake up. It's absurd! So it is for you, Christian, when talking about death! It's absurd to think that this state is eternal. This isn't what God created us for. God intended humans to live forever. And that is what you will do!

What an amazing God we have! You see, we have a Savior who didn't just face death, didn't just experience death, but he conquered death. He did this because he didn't deserve to die like you. He was perfect in every way. He was tempted to treat others poorly, like you have, but he didn't. He was tempted to lust and covet, like you, but he didn't. He was tempted to be lazy and apathetic, like you, but he didn't. He was tempted to blow off worshiping his Father, like you, but he didn't. This isn't meant to make you feel even more guilty! It's meant to reassure you, dear Christian. His death wiped those sins away. His resurrection from death reassures you that God's grace is true. And his lack of sin in the places where you have sinned is meant to give salve to a guilty soul. He died for you...personally... completely. Don't be tempted to think that he died for others and that your sin is too great. No, dear Christian, on the cross you were the only person on his mind. Your life through his death was his only concern.

So don't be ignorant, my dear Christians. Don't treat death as if it was just something "natural" and "unavoidable." It's far more than that...it's the best sleep you'll ever have. Amen.



Soli Deo Gloria!

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