

Words of Comfort
(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Introduction:

1. This morning we studied an important activity mentioned in Hebrews 3:13 [God's people are to exhort one another].
2. This evening we are studying the "words of comfort" recorded in these verses.

Discussion:

- I. (vs.13) PAUL DID NOT WANT THESE CHRISTIANS TO REMAIN IGNORANT CONCERNING THEIR LOVED ONES WHO HAD DIED
 - A. According to 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, they were waiting for the Lord's return (also see 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2).
 - B. For some reason they thought that their loved ones who had died would miss out on the blessings associated with the Lord's return, and they were sorrowful.
 - C. Paul said that they should not grieve like those who have no hope.
 1. It is not wrong to express sorrow and grief when a loved one dies in the Lord (John 11:35).
 2. These people obviously had misunderstandings about the resurrection.
 3. Paul taught them what they needed to know so they would no longer be ignorant, and their sorrow would be relieved.
- II. (vs.14) THE RESURRECTION OF CHRISTIANS IS BASED ON THE LORD'S RESURRECTION
 - A. When Paul was in Thessalonica he proved from the Scriptures that Jesus was resurrected (Acts 17:1-3).
 - B. Because Jesus was raised, His followers who have died will be raised when He returns (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).
- III. (vs.15-17) PAUL REVEALED WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN CHRIST RETURNS
 - A. (vs.15) Those who are alive when the Lord returns will not "prevent" [precede] those who have died in the Lord.
 1. (John 5:28-29) When Christ returns, those who have died will be raised.
 2. Those who died in the Lord will be raised to eternal life.
 3. (1 Corinthians 15:50-53) Those who are alive will be changed.
 4. This shows us that Christians who are alive when Jesus returns will have no special advantage over those who have died.
 - B. (vs.16a) The Lord's descent from heaven will be accompanied by 3 sounds:
 1. *"a shout"* (the Lord's voice -- John 5:28)
 2. *"the voice of the archangel"* (Michael -- Jude 9)
 3. *"the trump of God."*
 - C. (vs.16b) *"The dead in Christ shall rise first."*
 - D. (vs.17a) Those who are alive will be caught up together with those who have been raised, in the clouds.
 - E. (vs.17b) Together, we will meet the Lord in the air [Jesus will return in the clouds (Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 1:7)].
 - F. (vs.17c) The Lord's followers will be with Him forever (John 14:3).
- IV. (vs.18) THESE WORDS COMPOSE A COMFORTING MESSAGE

Conclusion:

1. Death for a Christian is temporary -- "sleep."
2. May these instructions help us gain a much greater appreciation for:
 - a. Psalm 116:15
 - b. Revelation 14:13.