

The Lord Will Return

1 Thess 4:13-5:11

SS Lesson for 04/21/2013

Devotional Scripture: 1 Cor 15:42-57

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson teaches about how **The Lord Jesus Will Return** for His people. The **study's aim** is to teach that because Jesus rose from the grave, we too will rise again to new hope in Him. It is also to detail the hope of the resurrection and our need to be ready when Jesus comes. The **study's application** is to encourage the anticipation of the time when all those who put their faith in Jesus will rise again and be with Him.

Key Verse: 1 Thess 5:9

9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Skeptics often mock the existence of God, scoffing, "If there is a man upstairs, let him strike me with lightning." God has rarely if ever responded to such taunts. The Bible acknowledges that He is God and not a mere man (Hos. 11:9), and mockers should be grateful, if God were merely a "man upstairs," the world would be in continual turmoil and undergoing repeated judgment. You know the feelings you have when someone cuts you off on the highway or brings a full cart into the express checkout lane. Most of us would pronounce judgment immediately. What if we had God's authority? Thankfully, God is "slow to anger" (Jonah 4:2), and mercifully He has held back His hand of judgment on this wicked world. But His judgment will not be restrained forever. The unleashing of His wrath is as certain for the future as His time of patience and mercy has been evident in the past (Rom. 2:5; Rev. 6:17). Jesus described that day of wrath as so horrific that if it were not cut short, no one would survive. He declared that no period of time in earth's history could compare with the destruction of the coming Day of Judgment (Matt. 24:21). This week's text stands out like an unshakable storm shelter in the midst of a whirlwind. Christians are not the object of the coming Day of Judgment. The Apostle Paul declared that believers are not destined for wrath. The text repeats what the apostle had first declared in I Thessalonians 1:10. He was not merely describing salvation from eternal judgment. No, he was explaining deliverance from a particular time of wrath to come upon the world—the same Day of Wrath Jesus recounted in Matthew 24. During his short stay in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey, the Apostle Paul had established a church. He also taught those believers about the coming day of tribulation, but they later misunderstood the purpose of that day. Since they were undergoing persecution, they were easily convinced by false teachers that they were actually in the tribulation. In both of his letters to the Thessalonian believers, Paul clearly explained that the Day of Judgment had not yet come; nor were they destined to experience its terrors. Instead, in I Thessalonians 4, he explained the rapture, the snatching away of believers before the time of wrath. The Thessalonian believers were concerned about their loved ones who had died after Paul left Thessalonica. What would become of them? Would they miss out on that miraculous meeting with the Lord that Paul had so passionately described to them? No, they would actually be taken first; then living believers would go to be with Christ (I Thess. 4:13-18). He called it the blessed hope (1 Thess. 5:2). That is why he told them to comfort one another with those words (I Thess. 4:18; 5:11). The blessed hope motivated weary witnesses hiding out in the catacombs. It was passed on to little children as a comfort in their fearful hours. Believers have taught it, sung about it, and found comfort in the knowledge that someday Jesus will return for His church before the terrible Day of Wrath that will come upon an unbelieving world. Let the text encourage you today.

Commentary from the Wycliffe Bible Commentary

The reason for this hope (1 Thess 5:8) is that God has destined believers for it rather than for *wrath* (cf. 1:10). *Appointed*, though lacking the definiteness of "predestinated" (Rom 8:29 ff.), nevertheless attributes salvation to "the direct purpose and action of God" (Milligan). *To obtain* implies that the believer has an active response to make. Salvation is made available *by (through) our Lord Jesus Christ*. The full title conveys the majesty of Jesus the Messiah.

Commentary from Barnes Notes

[*For God hath not appointed us to wrath*] This is designed as an encouragement to effort to secure our salvation. The wish of God is to save us, and therefore we should watch and be sober; we should take to ourselves the whole of the Christian armor, and strive for victory. If He had appointed us to wrath, effort would have been in vain, for we could do nothing but yield to our inevitable destiny. The hope of a final triumph should animate us in our efforts, and cheer us in our struggles with our foes. How much does the hope of victory animate the soldier in battle! When morally certain of success, how his arm is nerved! When everything conspires to favor him, and when he seems to feel that God fights for him, and intends to give him the victory, how his heart exults, and how strong is he in battle! Hence, it was a great point among the ancients, when about entering into battle, to secure evidence that the gods favored them, and meant to give them the victory. For this purpose they offered sacrifices, and consulted the flight of birds and the entrails of animals; and for this armies were accompanied by soothsayers and priests, that they might interpret any signs which might occur that would be favorable, or to propitiate the favor of the gods by sacrifice. See Homer, *passim*; Arrian's Expedition of Alexander, and the classic writers generally. The apostle alludes to something of this kind here. He would excite us to maintain the Christian warfare manfully, by the assurance that God intends that we shall be triumphant. This we are to learn by no conjectures of soothsayers; by no observation of the flight of birds; by no sacrifice which we can make to propitiate his favor, but by the unerring assurance of His Holy Word. If we are Christians, we know that He intends our salvation, and that victory will be ours; if we are willing to become Christians, we know that the Almighty arm will be stretched out to aid us, and that the "gates of hell" cannot prevent it.

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The concept of the major outlines came from reviewing the Scriptural Text.

Verse	Phrase	Major Outline
16	And the dead in Christ will rise first	The Dead in Christ
17	Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord	The Alive in Christ
2	The day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night	The Day of the Lord

Lesson Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Julius Caesar returned to Rome in 49 BC as a victorious general, having extended the territory of the Romans to the North Sea. During World War II, General Douglas MacArthur returned triumphantly to the Philippines with a strong military force, having been forced to flee to Australia two years earlier. After his arrival he uttered the famous words, "I have returned." In 1979, Ruhollah Khomeini returned to Iran from his exile in Paris to lead a revolution. He became the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Caesar, MacArthur, and Khomeini were heroes to some and villains to others. Such is the nature of history, for the triumphant return of a powerful leader can disrupt the power structures already in place. Caesar's return resulted in civil war, with Caesar eventually emerging as the master of the empire. MacArthur's return was the beginning of the end for Japanese occupation of the Philippines. Khomeini's return caused a revolt against the remnants of the previous regime, with opposition brutally suppressed. The Bible tells us about the return of a leader who is perfectly just, unrivaled in power, and fully blessed by God. To be sure, there will be some who will rue the day of his return, for it will not be good news for "the powers that be" that have rejected him. His return will not signal a new era in human history, but the end of history as we know it. This is the return in power and

glory of the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The return of Jesus is also called the second coming or the Parousia. It is referred to in 21 of the 27 New Testament books (absent only in Galatians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, Philemon, 2 John, and 3 John). This teaching was an integral part of the preaching of Paul, and it was eagerly received by the churches he planted. One such church was located in the city of Thessalonica. Paul was able to spend only about three weeks there (see Acts 17:1-10), and after his departure certain misunderstandings arose in the Thessalonian church concerning Christ's return. The lessons for this week and next week will look at two letters Paul wrote to that church to correct wrong perceptions.

From J. Hampton Keathley - From the Series: 1 Thessalonians: An Exegetical and Devotional Commentary

In chapter 4:13, the Apostle began with, "Now we do not want you to be uninformed." He then proceeded to enlighten them on an important prophetic theme. In this chapter, we find that Paul had thoroughly taught the Thessalonians on the Day of the Lord. Quite clearly, God wants us to know and understand the prophetic themes and doctrines of Scripture. But why? There are a number of biblical designs or purposes for the study and knowledge of the various prophetic themes of Scripture. As the last chapter shows, knowing prophecy is designed to comfort, encourage, and give hope where there would normally be no hope. It is also designed to remove ignorance so that Christians might be informed as a protection from erroneous ideas that might disturb them as we see in this passage and in 2 Thessalonians 2. A further blessing of knowing prophecy is that it also protects Christians from the counterfeit strategies of Satan and the world system that is under his control. As an example, one of the ancient counterfeits and one that will be a key note of his last day satanic strategies (a strategy already prominent today) is the belief in one world government which will be portrayed as a utopia and the final hope for mankind. But the greatest purpose of the prophetic Word is the pursuit of holiness by His people. This is everywhere evident in one prophetic passage after another. Check all the passages dealing with the return of the Lord and you will find that, almost without exception, our Lord's return is used as a basis for an exhortation to godliness. This includes themes like living as aliens in His service, living for heavenly treasure, and finding comfort in the midst of suffering and persecution through the assurance of Christ's return. The present passage is no exception. Too often we get so bogged down in the debate over when the rapture will occur (pre-trib, post-trib, mid-trib) that we tend to miss or ignore this emphasis. An understanding of the prophetic Word should mark us out as a distinct people, just as cream is separated from milk. We are not of this world, just as the Savior is not. This should show in the moral quality of our lives, in our values, priorities, and pursuits. Paul uses several analogies in this passage to illustrate this: **light** versus **darkness**, **sleep** versus **alertness**, **drunkenness** versus **soberness**, and **wrath** versus **deliverance**. Prophecy, then, is not designed to satisfy our curiosity or an urge for the sensational. Its design, in view of what it means spiritually, is to motivate Christians to holy living.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Dead in Christ (1 Thess 4:13-16)

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

No grief, but hope (13)

No grief because Jesus is the resurrection and the life (John 11:24-27)

24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

No grief because someday we can go to meet those who have died in Christ (2 Sam 12:19-23)

19 David noticed that his servants were whispering among themselves and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked. "Yes," they replied, "he is dead." 20 Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate. 21 His servants asked him, "Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!" 22 He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.' 23 But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

No grief because the death of a saint is precious in the sight of God (Ps 116:15)

15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

Hope because after death saints awake to eternal life (Dan 12:1-3)

12:1 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people-everyone whose name is found written in the book-will be delivered. 2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Reunion with dead in Christ (14)

Reunion as Jesus brings the dead in Christ with Him (1 Thess 3:13)

13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

Reunion with those who belong to Jesus (1 Cor 15:23)

23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

Reunion because we will know each other in Heaven (Matt 22:24-30)

24 "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. 25 Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. 26 The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. 27 Finally, the woman died. 28 Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?" 29 Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. 30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.

Resurrection of the dead (15)

Resurrection of the dead is a reality because Jesus was the firstfruit of the resurrected (1 Cor 15:20-23)

20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

Resurrection of the dead is a reality because it is a goal (Phil 3:10-11)

10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Resurrection of the dead is a reality because they will be imperishable (1 Cor 15:42)

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;

Resurrection of the dead is a reality because it is an elementary doctrine (Heb 6:1-3)

6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2 instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And God permitting, we will do so.

Resurrection of the dead is a reality because it is a trustworthy truth (2 Tim 2:11)

11 Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him;

Resurrection of the alive (16)

Resurrection of the alive because they will be changed (1 Cor 15:51-52)

51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed- 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Resurrection of the alive because Jesus tells of the taking away of them (Luke 17:34-35)

34 I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. 35 Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left."

Resurrection of the alive because that is what Jesus is returning for (Heb 9:28)

28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

The Alive in Christ (1 Thess 4:17-18)

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The rapture (17)

The Rapture (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)

The term “rapture” is nowhere used in our English versions of the Bible. It comes from a Latin word that means “to catch up.” Theologians use it to describe what will happen to followers of Christ when He comes to catch them up to heaven (vs. 17). The hope of His appearance should keep believers going during their lifetime on this earth.

Commentary from Barnes' Notes on the Rapture

The wording here used implies that there will be the application of external force or power by which this will be done. It will not be by any power of ascending which they will themselves have; or by any tendency of their raised or changed bodies to ascend of their own accord, or even by any effort of their own will, but by a power applied to them which will cause them to rise. What force or power is to be applied in causing the living and the dead to ascend, is not expressed. Whether it is to be by the ministry of angels, or by the direct power of the Son of God, is not intimated, though the latter seems to be most probable. The word should not be construed, however, as implying that there will be any reluctance on the part of the saints to appear before the Savior, but merely with reference to the physical fact that power will be necessary to elevate them to meet him in the air.

The rapture represents whether living or dead we will live with God forever (1 Thess 5:10)

10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

Comfort of the rapture (18)

There is comfort in the rapture because redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:27-28)

27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

There is comfort in the rapture because we live by faith (2 Cor 5:6-8)

6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 We live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

There is comfort in the rapture because we have a living hope in it (1 Peter 1:3-5)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

There is comfort in the rapture because the Holy Spirit is our guarantee (Eph 1:13-14)

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-to the praise of his glory.

The Day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:1-11)

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.
2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.
3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.
4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.
5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.
6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.
7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.
8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.
9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.
11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Coming of the day (1-3)

The Day of the Lord is coming because all in the grave will hear Jesus' voice (John 5:28-29)

28 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out-those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

The day of the Lord is like a thief in the night (2 Peter 3:10-12)

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives

Judgment occurs and rewards are to be handed out (2 Tim 4:8)

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Jesus will raise up His Church on that last day (John 6:39)

39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

God's good work in us will be completed on that day (Phil 1:6)

6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

No one knows about that day or hour of this day (Matt 24:36)

36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Jesus will drink of the fruit of the vine on that day (Matt 26:29)

29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

We know whom we have believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard what we have entrusted to Him for that day (2 Tim 1:12)

12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

Children of the light (4-5)

Children of the light have their trust in Jesus (John 12:36)

36 Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

Children of the light live a life full of goodness, righteousness and truth (Eph 5:8-9)

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)

Children of the light let their light shine before men (Matt 5:14-16)

14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Children of the light love one another (1 John 2:9-10)

9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.

Be watchful (6-7)

Meaning of sober and sleep (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)

The term "sober" carries with it the concept of being composed, calm, and collected. The apostle obviously was not suggesting that Christians get no rest or a good night's sleep. He merely meant for them to be in a state of continual alertness while they were awake and going about life's normal activities. It also can refer to spiritual dullness or insensitivity. Verse 7 appears to describe unbelievers, who remain in their state of spiritual lethargy and continue doing the same things as usual, ignorant of the certain judgment to come.

We must be watchful because the day is nearer than believed (Rom 13:11)

11 And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

We must be watchful because we don't know the day or hour (Matt 25:13)

13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

We must be watchful by making the most of every opportunity (Eph 5:15-17)

15 Be very careful, then, how you live-not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Put on the armor of God (8)

Put on the armor of God because the time is near (Rom 13:12)

12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Put on the armor of God to stand against the devil's schemes (Eph 6:11-18)

11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Put on the armor of God as weapons to use in the fight with evil strongholds (2 Cor 10:4)

4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

Put on the armor of God as part of our fight of the faith (1 Tim 6:12)

12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Appointment for salvation (9-10)

We have an appointment for salvation because we have been made a people of God (1 Peter 2:10)

10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

We have an appointment for salvation because God chose us (Eph 1:3-7)

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will- 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

We have an appointment for salvation because God predestined us (Rom 8:29-30)

29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

We have an appointment for salvation because God announced it (Heb 2:3)

3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

We have an appointment for salvation because it is the goal of our faith (1 Peter 1:9)

9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Edify one another (11)

Edify one another at every opportunity (Rom 14:19)

19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

Edify one another by seeking the good of others (1 Cor 10:23-24)

23 "Everything is permissible"-but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"-but not everything is constructive. 24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

Edifying one another is one of the Church's duties (Eph 4:10-13)

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Edify one another by controlling our speech (Eph 4:29)

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Edify one another by praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20)

20 But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The Christians in Thessalonica seem to have been a close-knit group. They depended on one another for support and encouragement. They had a close attachment to Paul and his coworkers (Silas, Timothy, and perhaps Luke). These men had brought a message of hope because salvation in Jesus Christ had come. Sadly, the Thessalonians apparently had lost some in their fellowship to death after Paul's departure. This put hope to the test. Could the message of the gospel overcome the doubts of death? Paul's encouraging answer: those who die in Christ will not miss out on his blessed and glorious return. In our age of overly privatized religion, we can miss an important part of Paul's message: the comfort we are to offer one another is based on our confidence in Christ's return. In this we become living encouragements.

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Living in a fallen world as we do, we encounter numerous things that can sap our spiritual vitality and hope if we are not careful. Since we also have a supernatural enemy out to either derail our testimony for Christ or weaken our spiritual influence, there is all the more reason to do what is necessary to keep hope alive. Some believers in Thessalonica had died since the Apostle Paul had visited and preached to them, and their loved ones were troubled as they tried to sort out the times in light of the prophetic word they had heard from him. In short, sorrow prevailed, and hope wavered. Paul therefore sought to clarify his earlier teaching in an effort to rekindle the believers' faith and hope. His effort to meet their needs has resulted in a passage that countless believers cling to in the worst of times. Christ will return in the clouds to take to Himself both those who have died in Him and believers living at the time. This event we call the rapture will begin a never-ending presence of the Lord with His own. God, who cannot lie, has promised that He will return for all who trust Him. Neither

the intervening centuries nor death itself can alter that promise. Regardless of your present circumstances, do not give up or tire of looking up. One fine day the call will come or the shout will be heard. As the hymn says, "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus" (Rusthoy, "When We See Christ"). The bewildered and grieving believers in Thessalonica were not to give in to their fears. Rather, they were to take the words of Paul and comfort one another. As the physical body of a person has ways of contributing to the well-being of the parts that are weaker, so the members of the body of Christ are to do what they can to strengthen other members. Who in your circle of Christian acquaintances could use an encouraging word today? Are there any whose hope in Christ is waning or who despair of the difficulties life has thrown at them? If you can think of any, that may well be your ministry of hope for today. Paul tried to redirect the outlook of his readers from confusion regarding prophetic events to living for Christ while patiently waiting for Him. They were to live watchfully, wearing the armor God supplies, which includes hope. Hope based on God's promise is hope based on a sure thing. Because true believers in Christ have the promises of God, including the sure return of Christ for them, they should not get so distracted by circumstances that they fail to live faithfully and confidently. Prophecy is important, but we can get so involved in trying to determine something God has kept to Himself that we neglect more urgent matters, such as serving Christ and ministering to others. May God help us to remember the basis for our hope as believers and to use that very hope to lift up fellow pilgrims on the way—those whose spiritual knees may be buckling under life's heavy load. Let us help one another keep hope alive.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. The Lord is gracious to assure us of the blessed future in store for us and for all who have gone before in Him (1 Thess.4:13-15)
2. The Lord's return for us is not something we can possibly miss or overlook (vs. 16-18)
3. Complacency is the most dangerous position for the world to be in (5:1-3)
4. Since we are children of light, we are to live like children of light (vs. 4-8)
5. Whatever happens in the short term, our permanent outlook is blessed fellowship with our Lord (vs. 9-11)

The Jewish Aspect from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

We and the Jews agree that the Messiah is coming. We would say that He is coming back again, while they are still looking for Him to come for the first time. Nevertheless, it is a point of contact. What the Jews do not have is a sure hope or clear teaching. The rabbis speculate on just what would bring the Messiah to the earth, perhaps everyone doing a good deed all at the same time, and they differ on whether the messiah is a person or the nation of Israel in general. Maybe the Messiah is two persons, the suffering Servant and the victorious Son of David. Reform Judaism, the liberal branch of the faith, tends to reject the idea of a personal messiah but holds to the concept of a future messianic era featuring the unity of all men as the children of God in the confession of the one and sole God and the establishment of truth, justice, and peace (Werblowsky and Wigoder, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion, Adarna*). There have been quite a few false messiahs in the past two thousand years, including Bar Kokhba in A.D. 132 and Shabbetai Zevi in 1665. The latter eventually converted to Islam under threat of death. These have often arisen in the kabbalistic branch of Judaism, which emphasizes mysticism and visions. Persecution fuels the uncritical acceptance of false messiahs. The genuineness of the claims of Jesus is based squarely on the Hebrew Scriptures. His coming fits in with the prophecies, and His Second Coming will be every bit as literal as His first one. Jesus has to come again because the Jews rejected Him at His first coming. They should have recognized Him because the events prophesied in connection with His coming were fulfilled; likewise, there are prophesied events that will be fulfilled before He comes to earth the second time. The signs of the times are readable by those who believe, know the Scriptures, and are looking for their fulfillment. The great joy of being a Bible believer believing in a literal interpretation is having a unity with other such interpreters. Just taking the words in their common usage and not trying to find any special code or hidden meaning in them brings us all to the same conclusions. We are living in the church age, which began at Pentecost and leads up to the rapture, which is described in I Thessalonians 4:14-17. A seven-year period known as Daniel's seventieth week will then be initiated by the covenant of antichrist with many nations. It will be divided in half by the abomination of desolation

(Dan. 9:27). This time of tribulation will be marked by God's dealing again with His people the Jews. Many of them will recognize Jesus as their true Messiah and be saved. Persecution will then be launched against them, but it will be cut short by Christ's return to the earth. There are many other details of prophecy that we can share with our Jewish friends, who may be astonished that so many things can be known. The Bible offers them a future as the favored nation. It makes sense of their Scriptures, foretells an end of Gentile domination, assures righteous judgment on their enemies, and comforts them with God's love. A Bible study on Daniel will bring in all these factors and allow the Jews to get into their own Bible. Ask them what their rabbi says about the passages. Get them thinking. Pray for their eyes to be opened to the truth. Sympathize with their suffering, and be patient. It may take years for them to come to salvation.