

1 Thessalonians 4:9-18

Death, sleeping and new life with God forever.

vv. 9-10. i. Two things that separated the Christian Churches from their contemporaries; **purity of their lives** (see v. 7-8) **and the love they practised, because of God's love** (1 Thes 1:4), and a special brotherly love towards fellow Christians. ii. This brotherly love is possible because they have been **'taught by God to love each other'** (Jn. 7:16-17; 14:23). This work of God is linked to the presence of the Holy Spirit who has been given to believers (God's presence with them, Jn. 14:15-17).

Vv. 11-12. Paul uses paradoxical language to make his point. Paul seems to be combatting a wrong view of readiness for the return of Christ, the Parousia (future coming/presence/return of Jesus). Some Thessalonian Christians seemed to have given up working, becoming dependent on others as they waited for the return of Christ (see 2 Thes. 3:6-11.). **They are encouraged to see their lifestyle, the way they lived, as their witness; this is being ready for the return of Christ.**

Vv. 13-18. The Thessalonian Christians were confident of the **Parousia - the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the judgment of all** - but they had some concerns about believers who had died. Will those who have died be disadvantaged? **'fallen asleep'** - 'sleep' can be a euphemism for death (see Mt. 9:18-25).

The rest of mankind (13b), non-believers, are for Paul like those who grieve without hope. For them death has the last word; not so for believers. The assurance of being raised from the dead for those 'in Jesus' (united to him through faith) is based on the truth that **Jesus died and rose again**. Jesus' death pays the penalty for human sin and destroys the power of death which is confirmed by his resurrection. Paul gives an outline of the promise of the return of Jesus Christ and the place of believers.

Reflection/Response.

The Scriptures challenge us to believe God's word of promise (*'according to the Lord's word'*) that Jesus will return and that all believers will be raised and will join with him in the new age forever.

How do our lives show we have a sure hope of being raised to eternal life with God?

How are our lives a witness to our confidence in God's word of promise – death has been overcome by the death and resurrection of Christ for us?

BB