

Daniel #7

February 18, 2024

Series Title: Daniel's Visions Of the Ages

Today's Message: How to Think About Life and Death as a Christian; Daniel 3:16-18 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The Three faced death on that day when they stood before Nebuchadnezzar. They knew that death was imminent if God did not intervene. They knew, they were certain that God could and would save them from the fire if He chose to do so. But they also knew that God may not save them from the fire. But because they knew something, because they were informed about God, the Living God they could live or die in faith and with great peace!

Last week we talked at length about being willing to die for our convictions like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. We concluded by addressing the challenge of taking up our cross and following Jesus. It was a weighty message. It may have been hard to relate to the idea about losing your life for the sake of Jesus Christ. It's possible that some of you have thought about living out a death-defying faith. If so, that message would have stirred you. But others of you may just be wondering how you are supposed to face the end of your own life, or the end of life of a loved one. I thought about that a lot this past week.

Today we will digress a little from our detailed study of Daniel to think about what we should know in order to face death boldly and courageously like *the three*. Surely *the three* had to consider how they would face their own death. Either they would die as men with hope, or as men without hope. To die without hope would be tragic, perhaps the most miserable of deaths. But to die with hope for these *three* would mean to die with confidence that God would secure their safety unto eternal life! And without a doubt *the three* had faith rooted in God, convictions built on the faith and knowledge of God, commitment to obey God no matter the cost, and courage to act on that faith and risk their lives for the sake of the glory of God!

It's natural for people to try to avoid death; we were created to live. But we know death is present and we know where death originated. We know that when sin entered the world at the fall of Adam in the Garden that death then entered the world through that sin. Death, therefore, came to all people, because all sinned (Romans 5:12). The Bible also tells us that the natural inclination of people is to fear death. In fact, death has such a grip on the human heart that it is said to hold the human heart captive to the fear of it.

Yet, for the Christian, there is hope in death. That hope is found in the person and work of **Jesus Christ** our Savior! Hebrews 2:14-15 teaches, "Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that **by His death He** might **break the power** of him who hold the power of death—that is, the devil—and **free** those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

Even with this knowledge Christians often times struggle with the death of a loved one, even if they die in the Lord. We struggle because death brings great sorrow and grief because the loss of that loved one is painful and their absence is deeply felt. We find ourselves struggling with the death of a loved especially when, in our grief, we forget that death ushers the believer into the loving presence of God for ever and ever.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Paul was moved by the grief suffered by many of these believers who feared that because Christ had not come before some of their beloved Christians had died that somehow those who died would miss the resurrection to come. In these verses the Holy Spirit provides divine comfort through the Apostle Paul. Paul's pastoral heart is poured out through 1) Admonition; 2) Declaration; and 3) Consolation.

I) **(4:13) An Admonition: Do not be ignorant about the hope we have in Christ.**

A) Truth: Where there is ignorance there is most likely to be confusion: Do be confused!

- 1) There was confusion concerning those who had passed on in death.
 - (a) Paul offers clarity and comfort.
 - (i) By use of the phrase “fall asleep” to describe what happened upon death.
 - (a) It’s a picture of the body at rest.
 1. Not torment.
 - (b) Jesus described the situation of the little girl in Matthew 9:24
 1. “The girl is not dead but asleep.”
 - a. Then He raised her! For the Son of God, it was as if he awakened her out of sleep! **(keep that in mind as we go deeper into this passage)**

B) Truth: Grief over loss is painful but not to be dominating.

- 1) Paul admonishes the church NOT to grieve like those without hope.
 - (a) People without hope are without hope because they are without God in the world (Eph.2:12).
- 2) It is understandable for a person to think that they cannot live without the one who died.
 - (a) But a Christian must be informed to the reality of our lives, including our death.
 - (i) Psalm 31:15, David says, “My times are in Your hands.”
 - (a) This Truth should dominate a believer’s mindset, even in sorrow and grief.

C) Truth: The Bible speaks well of the Death of a Believer.

- 1) Revelation 14:13: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.’”
 - (a) “Blessed”—happy, they are beyond the reach of anything causing frustration!
 - (b) “...who die in the Lord”—They are with Him, where He is!
 - (i) John 17:24: “Father, I will that those You have given Me to be with Me where I am...”
 - (c) “...resting (in the Lord) from their labor
 - (i) Isaiah 40:1-2: “Comfort, comfort My people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has ended...”
 - (d) “...their deeds/works follow them...”
 - (i) Not for admission, or for righteousness, but to rewarded by the Lord!

II) **(4:14-17a) A Declaration: He shall descend from Heaven with those who have fallen asleep!**

A) Truth: The Declaration Statement: Jesus Christ is the centrality of our hope!

- 1) (4:14) To combat ignorance you must hold faithfully to the Truth.
 - (a) “We believe”
 - (i) That Jesus died.
 - (a) A vicarious/substitutionary death on the cross in place of His people! (2 Cor. 5:21)
 - (ii) That Jesus rose from the dead.
 - (a) We rose with Him (Rom. 6:5,8; 8:11; 2 Cor. 4:10; Eph. 2:6; Phi. 3:10-11; Col. 3:1)
 - (iii) That Jesus is coming again.
 - (a) God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep with Him!
 1. “sleep” is temporary. The body temporarily at rest, awakened at His return!
 2. Cemetery: did you know cemetery means, “sleeping place?”
 - (b) We live! **NOT SOUL SLEEP! Though** the body is “asleep” we are alive with Him.
 - (i) Philippians 1:21-24: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know. I am

torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.”

- (ii) 2 Corinthians 5:8: “We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord.”

(c) We fear not! Those who have fallen asleep will not miss Him b/c they are **with Him!**

2) (4:15-17a) Declaration of the Truth concerning the sequence of resurrection events!

(a) The bodies of departed saints will be awakened first, before living believers are changed.

- (i) What kind of bodies? 1 Cor. 15:42-44: “So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”

(b) The Lord comes first, leading the way!

(c) The loud command

(d) The voice of the arch angel

(e) The trumpet call of God

(f) The dead in Christ will reunite with their resurrection body!

(g) Those who are still alive will be caught up (snatched, seized, delivered) in the clouds!

- (i) 1 Cor. 15:51-52: “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will ALL be changed—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.”

(ii) The trumpet blast is a summons to worship! (See Revelation 4 and 5)

III) (4:17b-18) A Consolation (Comfort to give courage!): We will be with Him forever!

A) Truth: Everyone who belongs to Christ are with Him in life and in death forever and ever alive in Him!

- 1) Jesus prayed in John 17:24, “Father, I will that those you have given Me be with Me where I am and to see My glory...”

(a) Spiritually speaking we were IN Him in the Father’s will before the foundation of the world!

(b) Spiritually speaking we were IN Him in His death on the cross.

(c) Spiritually speaking we were IN Him in His resurrection.

(d) While we live on this earth in these bodies, we are IN Him now and He is IN us!

(e) When we pass from these bodies, we will be with Him presently in heaven.

(f) When comes to gather His people, giving new resurrection bodies, we will be with Him.

(g) “Nothing, no nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus!”

B) This doctrine concerning this gathering of the saints unto the Lord is for our encouragement.

- 1) Is not written to divide us, nor to cause us to argue over exactly when all this will happen...

2) It is written to encourage us!

(a) In this life there will be plenty of trials, disappointments, heartaches. There will be times when it seems like the Lord removes His comforts and presence. We weep and mourn.

(b) But to know, to be aware of what happens to the Christian when they die will keep you in the fight! It will strengthen our commitment to follow Him with courageous acts of faith!

3) Keep this doctrine before you and be of good cheer!

- (a) 1 John 3:2-3: “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies Himself, just as He is pure.”