

For GC Discussion

- Think about those 3 areas of faith, hope and love - how can we be stirring each of these up in our lives and the lives of others around us?

- How can we saturate ourselves in the truth of Jesus return and it's implications for our lives now?

Next Week: we conclude our study as we look at Paul's final instructions to the church.

Notes and Questions

For Worship: Listen to '*Coming back for me*' by Brenton Brown. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



1 Thessalonians

Waiting for the King

Week 5: The Day of the Lord

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

This Weeks Summary

In our text this week Paul moves on to address one of the major themes of the letter - he wants this church to be clear on the truth of Jesus return to collect all those who have trusted Him, and the hope that gives us as His people.

For Study:

This week the verses below are all about the main theme of our text - the 2nd coming of Jesus:

Matthew 24:3-25:36

Luke 12:35-48

Acts 1:6-11

1 Corinthians 15:12-58

Philippians 3:12-21

Colossians 3:1-17

Hebrews 9:27-28

James 5:7-11

1 Peter 1:3-9

2 Peter 3:1-13

As we get closer to the end of the letter, Paul now addresses one of the main issues that was in his mind as he wrote to this young church. There is clearly some confusion entering into the church around the truth of Jesus return, and Paul wants to set them straight. As you read on to Second Thessalonians, you find out that this brief section of the letter wasn't enough to sort all the problems, but Paul has to come back to it again. What Paul shares here clearly stirred up more questions, and he shows his belief that this area of the Christian faith is critical to get straight in our minds so we might move on and grow in our faith.

Freedom in the truth

It seems clear that somehow, false teaching had got in to the church in Thessalonica. The church was struggling with the idea that if a person who had trusted Jesus died before He returned for them then that put their salvation in doubt. These lies were causing real difficulty in the lives of these believers, and Paul is well aware that it is the truth that will set them free from those troubles. Therefore Paul takes the opportunity to replace the lies with the truth so that they wouldn't be 'uninformed' in their faith. To 'inform' someone of something sounds quite clinical and dry, but the reality is that if the church in Thessalonica really caught hold of the 'information' that Paul was giving them then their lives would completely change.

You see truth informs the way that we live - we rarely, if ever, do anything that doesn't match up with what we really think about life and about God. When we sin and struggle in our Christian lives, what we show is that we don't fully know, understand, or believe the truth of God's word. This is why Paul tells us in Romans 12:2 that we should be 'transformed' by the renewing of our minds. You can see the reality of how this works in the lives of the Thessalonian church. As members of their church passed away, because of the lies that were present within the church they would have become distracted, and maybe even consumed with a grief that would clearly stop them from living as free and fruitful a life as they ought to. Maybe part of the confusion was that they were expecting Jesus to return before any members of the church died, and so what was happening would have served to undermine everything that they had been taught by the Apostle Paul and others with him. Living the Christian life isn't just about will power - it is in large part about allowing the truth to permeate everything we do, and therefore transform the way that we live our lives. Paul knew that and that's why this letter was critical for the church then, and it's also why the Scriptures are critical for us today.

Faith, Hope and Love at the centre

As Paul continues to apply the truth of Jesus return to the church he uses the picture of living in light, and living in darkness. Those in the world who are in no way expecting or waiting for Jesus to return are effectively living in darkness. One day Jesus will return and they will be completely caught off guard, and will ultimately suffer the consequences of ignoring the Word of God. However Paul wants this church to be people living in the light, who will not be surprised by Jesus return, and as he tells them how to do this he returns to 3 concepts that have already turned up in the letter previously.

Paul has already commended the church for their life of faith in the truth he spoke to them, their love for each other and for the world, and their patient hope in the return of the Lord Jesus, despite the confusion that evidently does exist. It may well be a relief to this young church that Paul hasn't got all kinds of new things for them to do - his simple encouragement for them is that they continue to grow in the same 3 areas that he has already spoken of. The Christian life is often simpler than we give it credit for - it is often difficult to carry out what we know is right, but if we concentrate our minds on these 3 things primarily we will surely grow in our faith, and be fruitful in our walk with God.

Courage for today as we think about tomorrow

Twice in our text Paul tells the church that they should use the truth of Jesus return to encourage each other. Life can be frightening in different ways, and none more so for many than the thought of death, but the reality that Jesus will one day return to receive His people into glory should give us great courage as we face the twists and turns of life. Just as we can get through a hard working week by looking forward to the weekend, or survive a long school term knowing that the holidays lie at the end of it, so we can face life with boldness, perseverance and great purpose when we know what lies at the end of it all.

One of the questions this letter should be causing us to ask is how we, as God's people, can flood our lives with the truth that Jesus is coming back? How can we view this life in it's proper place, as transient, and often empty as opposed to the life to come that is eternal and abundant? Understanding these truths as we've already said will go a great way to literally transforming the way that we live - the things we see as important, our goals and ambitions, and our treatment of all those around us will be radically different as we live in the light of Jesus return.