

**By The Word of The Lord– Sunday October 20<sup>th</sup> 2013.**

***<sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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 not precede those who have fallen asleep. (1.Thess.4:13-15)***

Beloved in the Lord,

Upon what do you base your hope? What is the foundation of your hope? There is only one sure foundation on which to base our hope and that is The Word of The Lord – God’s Word – The Holy Bible. Without the Bible we do not have the truth about many important things that pertain to life and death. One of the most important things that we need to be clear about is eternal life.

Each one of us will experience death and each one of us will experience the resurrection and each one of us will live eternally in a new resurrected body. These are indisputable facts. It is important that we base our faith upon the truth, that we base our hope upon the truth and there is only one truth – The Bible.

Paul begins our text today with the words: We do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep. Another translation says ignorant. When we know what God’s Word says about those who have died then we come out of ignorance. There are so many different beliefs and stories and fables about what happens when we die, but there is only one truth and that is The Bible, God’s Holy Word. When we know the truth it sets us free from the fear of death and gives us true hope.

Paul wrote: ***“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.”*** Death is always accompanied by grief. That is natural. It is normal to grieve the death of a loved one, but if we are in Christ, our grieving is not hopeless. Jesus changed the whole meaning of death and He disarmed it of its power over us. As Jesus stood at the tomb of his friend Lazarus He said:

***“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)***

With His own death upon the cross and subsequent resurrection on Easter morning, Jesus broke the power of sin and death for all eternity. We read Jesus words in Revelation:

***“Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup> and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades”(Rev.1:17-18).***

The power of death has been broken by Jesus. All power is in His hands. He has the keys to death and Hades. He clearly said: ***“he who believes in Me will live even if he dies...”***

Everything Jesus has promised is in effect. His promises are iron clad. They are sealed with His own blood. We can fully trust Him, because He has the power and the authority to keep what He has promised. We cannot have this absolute security in anyone or anything else. There is no life apart from Jesus.

This is why I invite you to trust in Him completely. He is the only one who can raise you from the grave and give you eternal life in Heaven, with the Father. He said: ***“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me “ (John 14:6).***

If it is your desire to spend eternity in Heaven with Jesus in the Father’s house, then you must come to Him in faith, you must believe on Him. There is no other way. The Father’s House is Holy and nothing unholy can enter in. Sin cannot abide in the presence of Almighty God who is Holy.

This is why we need Jesus. Only the blood of Jesus can wash away our sin and make us pure and holy. Only those who have been washed in the blood of Jesus will enter The Father’s House.

Those who are not in Christ, they too will live forever, but not in Heaven, but in Hell. A place of utter darkness. This place is so terrible and horrible, that Jesus paid the most incredible price to keep us out of there, to save us.

***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. <sup>18</sup> He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. “ (John 3:16-18)***

God so loved each one of us that He gave us His Son Jesus as our Saviour. When we believe on Him, trust in Him, accept Him as our Lord and Saviour then we are set free from sin and death.

Over and over we hear the word “believe”. Jesus asked Martha at Lazarus tomb: “Do you believe?” He was asking her if she believed that He is The Resurrection and the Life. Do you believe?

This is a vital question and one you must answer, because your eternity hinges upon this. The cemetery is not the final point. This is a holding place for our body. Here we lay the mortal body to rest; it is planted as a seed for the new Resurrected body.

°One day, in God’s appointed time, the dead will rise. Those who have believed in Jesus will be raised to life with Him eternally, those who have not, to be lost forever.

Where we will spend eternity is a matter that has to be settled in this life. It has to be sorted out before your body arrives here at the cemetery. When you are dead it is too late to change anything. We could put it this way to help you understand: You need your visa for Heaven, before you set out. You cannot get it on the way or upon arrival. This is a very serious matter and I plead with you to listen carefully. Death and eternity are very serious matters. Eternity is a very long time.

God loves each one of us and it is His desire that we spend eternity with Him. There is room for all. Jesus said: ***“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup> In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:1-2)***

There is room for you, room for me. Jesus has done everything He is going to do. He has prepared your place. He has signed your visa in His own blood. The question is: “Have you received it from His hand?”

If you haven’t as yet, what is stopping you? Come today and receive. It is free. He will give it to all who will receive. Don’t put it off, tomorrow may already be too late.

If you have your visa, then allow our meditations today to strengthen you and comfort you. Don’t rely upon your feelings, but place your hope in God’s Word.

Further in our text Paul writes a very graphic description of what is to come:

***“<sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1.Thess.4:16-18)***

You see, when we base our hope upon God’s Word, we are able to comfort one another. We are able to support one another, encourage one another. God gives us His Word to strengthen, encourage us. To give us clarity and understanding, so that we do not live in ignorance and grieve as those without hope.

Today, as we hold our memorial service, as we remember our loved ones who have died, let us be encouraged by the blessed and sure hope Jesus gives us. May we leave the cemetery today with Paul’s confession:

***“for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. <sup>9</sup> For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” Romans 14:8*** Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.