



Finding Comfort When Believing Loved Ones Die

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1 Thessalonians 4:13-15

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

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 Thessalonians 4:16-18

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.

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.

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Main Point

When believing loved ones die,
true and lasting comfort is found
in the hope of the gospel,
and we should be eager to give
and receive this comfort.

Comfort When Loved Ones Die

Why was comfort needed?

1 Thessalonians 4:18

Therefore comfort one another
with these words.



Why was comfort needed?

Believing loved ones had fallen asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

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about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve
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about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve
as do the rest who have no hope.

Sleep was a common euphemism for death.

John 11:11

“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep...”

Acts 13:36

“For David, after he had served the purpose of God
in his own generation, fell asleep,
and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13

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.

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about those who are asleep, **so that you will not grieve
as do the rest who have no hope.**

Apparently, some were so discouraged
by the death of their loved ones that they
were experiencing a kind of grief
unbecoming believers who have hope.

These grieving believers needed to be comforted with the hope of the gospel.

“...so that you will not grieve
as do the rest who have no **hope**.”



Why was comfort needed?

Believing loved ones had fallen asleep.

There were concerns about the future
of those who had died.

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about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve
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brethren,
about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve
as do the rest who have no hope.

Given the content and nature of Paul's instruction, it seems apparent that the Thessalonian believers had concerns about what would happen in respect to their loved ones when Jesus returned.

They were not likely concerned
about resurrection itself.

Nor was the issue Jesus' return, *per se*,
or about the eternal state.

Most likely they were concerned about
what would happen to their deceased
loved ones at Jesus' triumphal return.

Comfort When Loved Ones Die

Why was comfort needed?

How did Paul provide this comfort?

1 Thessalonians 4:13

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.

What follows was intended to
answer their concerns and to give
them comfort in their grief.



How did Paul provide this comfort?

He reminded them of the hope found
in their creedal confession.

1 Thessalonians 4:113-14

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.

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

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For **if** we believe that **Jesus died and rose again,**
even so **God will bring with Him those**
who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

What amazing comfort this is
to us if we will take hold of it
and look forward to it!

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who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

What does this phrase mean?

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about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve
as do the rest who have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,
even so God will bring with Him those

who have fallen asleep **through Jesus.**

1 Thessalonians 4:113-14

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.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,

**even so God those who have fallen asleep
through Jesus will bring with Him.**

Even so, through Jesus, God will bring
with Him those who have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:21

For since through a man came death, ***through* a man**
also came the resurrection of the dead.

Their consistent confession of faith
in Jesus' death and resurrection
gave them assurance and hope
of our future resurrection.

How did Paul provide this comfort?

He reminded them of the hope found in their creedal confession.

He informed them of the hope found in Jesus' instruction regarding His return.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 and 15
But we do not want you to be uninformed,
brethren...

1 Thessalonians 4:13 and 15

But **we do not want you to be *ignorant***,
brethren...

For this we say to you by a 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 Thessalonians 4:13 and 15

But **we do not want you to be *ignorant***,
brethren...

For **this we say to you by a 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.

What is this word of the Lord?

1 Thessalonians 4:15

For this we say to you by a word of the Lord,
that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord,
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Paul's Summation

1 Thessalonians 4:15

For this we say to you by a 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 Thessalonians 4:16-17

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.

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.

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Matthew 24:30-31

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky,
and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they
will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky
with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels
with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect
from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

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John 5:28

“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming,
in which **all who are in the tombs will hear His voice.**”

Matthew 25:5-6

Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. “But at midnight **there was a shout**,
“**Behold, the bridegroom!** Come out to meet him.”

Matthew 25:5-6

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1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then **we...will be caught up together** with them in the clouds **to meet the Lord** in the air.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

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will be raised imperishable, and **we will be changed**.

1 Corinthians 15:54

Then will come about the saying that is written,
“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

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Philippians 3:20-21

For our citizenship is **in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior**, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory.

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the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout...

...Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...

Acts 1:9-11

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the heaven while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

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What are Paul's key points?
Jesus will descend from heaven.

1 Thessalonians 4:16
For the Lord Himself
will descend from heaven...

1 Thessalonians 4:16

For the Lord Himself with a shout,
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1 Thessalonians 4:16

For the Lord Himself with a shout,
with the voice of an archangel_
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1 Thessalonians 4:16

For the Lord Himself with a shout,
with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God
will descend from heaven...

What are Paul's key points?

Jesus will descend from heaven.

Deceased believers will be resurrected.

1 Thessalonians 4:16

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

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What are Paul's key points?

Jesus will descend from heaven.

Deceased believers will be resurrected.

All believers (living and dead) will be joined with Jesus in His descent and will be with Him forever.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

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

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.

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

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together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,
and so we shall always be with the Lord.

This has been understood by some to refer to a “secret rapture” in which believers are invisibly caught up into heaven for a period of time before Christ’s return.

This is unlikely for several reasons.

Paul connects these events with “the day of the Lord” which comes at the end of all things.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that **the day of the Lord** will come just like a thief in the night.

This is unlikely for several reasons.

Jesus says these things will happen at the end,
after the tribulation of those days.

Matthew 24:29-30

“But immediately **after the tribulation of those days**
*the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its
light, and the stars will fall* from the sky, and the
powers of the heavens will be shaken. **And then** the
sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky...”

This is unlikely for several reasons.

Paul has already referred to “the coming” of the Lord twice in the letter and will refer to it again in 5:23 and twice in his second letter, and he connects Jesus’ coming to final judgment as do James, Peter, and John.

2 Thessalonians 2:8

Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of **His coming.**”

This is unlikely for several reasons.

Paul has already referred to “the coming” of the Lord twice in the letter and will refer to it again in 5:23 and twice in his second letter, and he connects Jesus’ coming to final judgment as do James, Peter, and John.

James 5:7-8

Therefore be patient, brethren, until **the coming** of the Lord...You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for **the coming** of the Lord is near.

This is unlikely for several reasons.

Paul has already referred to “the coming” of the Lord twice in the letter and will refer to it again in 5:23 and twice in his second letter, and he connects Jesus’ coming to final judgment as do James, Peter, and John.

2 Peter 3:4

...and saying, “Where is the promise of **His coming**? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”

This is unlikely for several reasons.

Paul has already referred to “the coming” of the Lord twice in the letter and will refer to it again in 5:23 and twice in his second letter, and he connects Jesus’ coming to final judgment as do James, Peter, and John.

1 John 2:28

Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame **at His coming.**

This is unlikely for several reasons.

The term “caught up” is most likely Paul’s play on this word commonly used by the pagans to express the hopelessness of death.

“When the news was brought to us that Gaius Caesar... was **snatched** by cruel fate from the Roman people... this renewed and multiplied our grief.

Funeral inscriptions referred to Fate “**snatching away**” the living to the place of Hades.

“As you pass by, whoever reads this, stop, traveler, and look at how I lament in vain, unworthily **snatched away.**”

This is unlikely for several reasons.

Apantesis, the term used for our “meeting” with the Lord in the air, refers to a formal reception of a king or dignitary in which the people went out to meet him and then return with him into the city to celebrate.

“Just imagine what *apantesis* he is receiving from the towns, what honors are paid to him!”

Matthew 25:6

“But at midnight there was a shout, “Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him (come out to the *apantesis*).”

The Thessalonians were likely concerned that their deceased loved ones would miss out on Jesus' *apantesis*, but Paul assures them that they will be resurrected first, and then all would go to meet Jesus for His triumphal return.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

For the Lord Himself...will descend from heaven
and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain will be snatched up
together with them...to the *apantesis* of the Lord in the
air.

But let's not miss the most important word of comfort given to us in Paul's instruction...

1 Thessalonians 4:17-18

...and so **we shall always be with the Lord!**

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Psalms 23:4

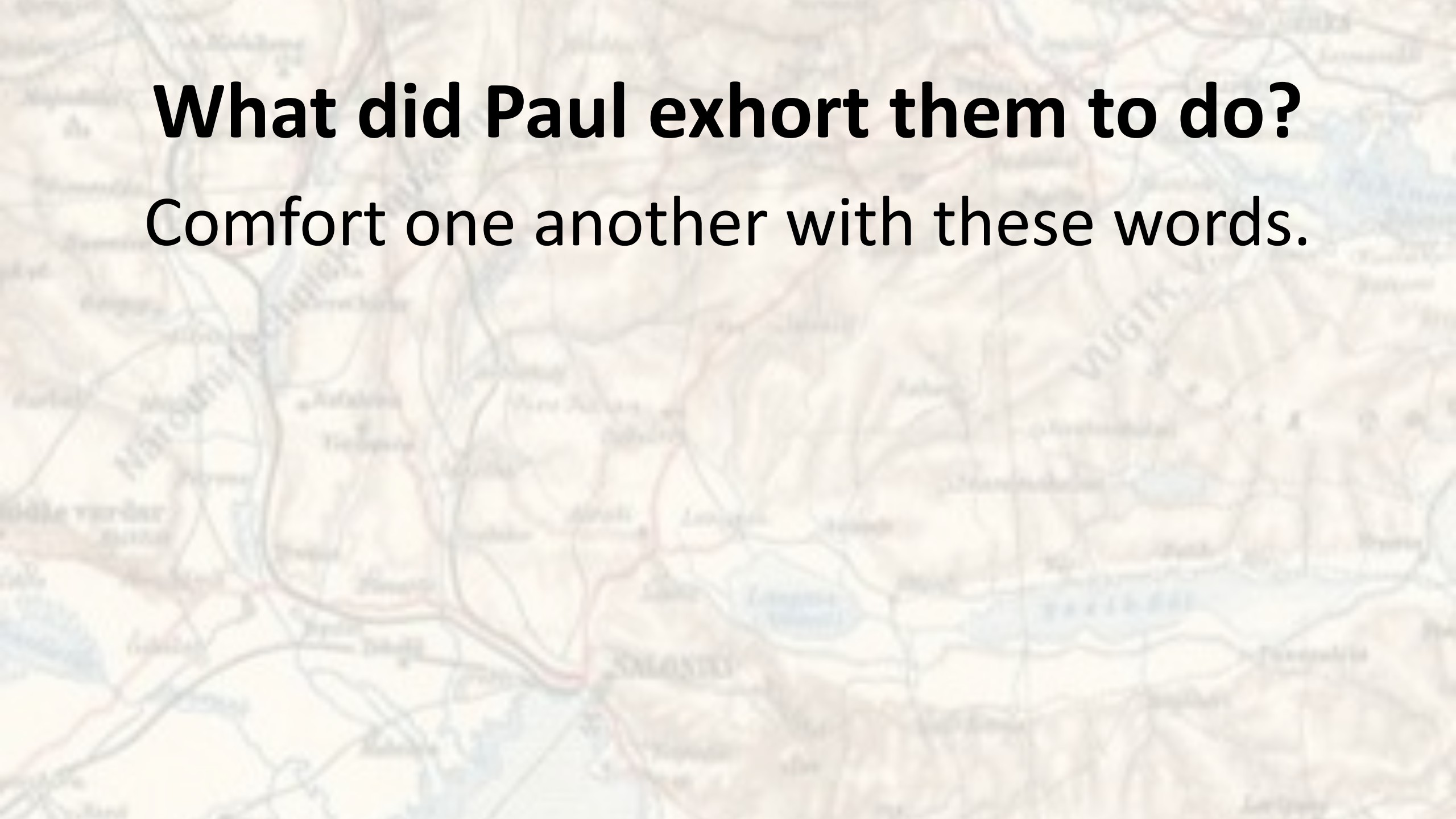
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, **for You are with me.**

Comfort When Loved Ones Die

Why was comfort needed?

How did Paul provide this comfort?

What exhortations did Paul give them?



What did Paul exhort them to do?
Comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

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Therefore **comfort one another** with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

Therefore comfort one another **with these words.**

The words that God gives us in His Word
are sufficient to provide the comfort
we need *in every circumstance!*

What did Paul exhort them to do?

Comfort one another with these words.

Receive this comfort from one another.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Implied in this command for believers
to comfort one another is a command
to receive the comfort given.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

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.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

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.

The great temptation is to brush off comfort from the Scriptures as being trite, but this suggests a covert belief that there is some greater source of comfort than the hope offered to us in the gospel.

Conclusion

Christian grief differs fundamentally from pagan grief and should serve as a witness to the hope we have in Christ.

Are you preparing for the inevitable losses that will come, and are you ready to receive comfort from God's Word when offered to you?