



What's the Matter with Comfort?

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

Our souls are grieved by many things,
especially the loss of loved ones;
and true comfort is held out to us
in the hope of the gospel, but we must
be willing to receive it.

What's the Matter with Comfort?

Consider the matter of grief.

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.



Considering the Matter of Grief

What is the nature of grief?

1 Thessalonians 4:13

...so that you will not grieve

as do the rest who have no hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

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As those who have nothing to look
forward to but loss!

Consider Jesus' Words to His Disciples

John 16:22

“Therefore you too have grief now;
but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice,
and no one will take your joy away from you.”

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Why?

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but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice,

**and no one will take your joy
away from you.”**

Jesus understood that the source of their grief was fear that He would be taken from them, in other words, it was their fear of loss.



Considering the Matter of Grief

What is the nature of grief?

What was the loss they feared?

1 Thessalonians 4:13

We do not want you to be uninformed...
so that you will not grieve as do the rest...

What does Paul's following instruction tell us about their grief, about what loss they feared?

Paul's key point was that **all believers** (living and dead) will be joined with Jesus in His triumphant descent.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

For the Lord Himself will descend...

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...

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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...

Paul's emphasis is their togetherness –
“we...***together with them*** will be caught up.”

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then we who are alive and remain

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

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then we who are alive and remain

will be caught up **together with them** in the clouds

to meet the Lord in the air...

The key issue was their *togetherness*
in this “meeting” of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then we who are alive and remain
will be caught up together with them in the clouds

to meet the Lord in the air...

In other words, the Thessalonians were
afraid that their deceased loved ones
would miss out on this meeting.

Why was this such a big deal?

Paul called this meeting an *apantesis* which referred to a formal reception in which the people went out to meet a coming king or dignitary and then returned with him in great celebration to the city.

The word *apantesis* was a technical term common to his readers and understood widely in that day.

“Just imagine what *apantesis* [Julius Caesar] is receiving from the towns, what honors are paid to him!”

Why was this such a big deal?

We struggle to understand their concern because we have no real point of comparison in our culture.

They were not afraid that their loved ones would not be resurrected or that they would not be present with the Lord in death; they were grieved that they would miss out on this indescribable celebration.

Think again about wedding feasts!

Matthew 25:6

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

Think again about wedding feasts!

Matthew 25:6

“But at midnight there was a shout, “Behold, the bridegroom!

Come out **to the *apantesis*.**”

When you consider the death of loved ones, what losses have you experienced, or what losses do you anticipate?

What's the Matter with Comfort?

Consider the matter of grief.

Consider the matter of hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

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

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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.**

Hope is the matter!



Considering the Matter of Hope

Why do we have hope?

1 Thessalonians 4:13

Do not grieve as the rest who have no hope.

Unbelievers have no real hope and grieve accordingly; but *you do have hope*, so you ought ***not*** grieve like them.

Why do we have hope?

1 Thessalonians 4:13

If we believe that Jesus died and rose again;
even so, *through Jesus*, God will bring with Him
those who have fallen asleep.

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If we believe that **Jesus died** and rose again;
even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him
those who have fallen asleep.

Romans 14:9

For to this end Christ died and lived again,
that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Romans 14:9

For to this end Christ died and lived again,

**that He might be Lord both of the dead
and of the living.**

Romans 5:10

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

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If we believe that **Jesus** died and **rose again**;
even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him
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1 Corinthians 15:17

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless;
you are still in your sins.

Christ's death was payment for our sin.

Christ's resurrection was proof
of the sufficiency of His payment.



Considering the Matter of Hope

Why do we have hope?

What is our hope?

1 Thessalonians 4:13

We do not want you to be uninformed...
so that **you will...have hope.**

What is our hope?

1 Thessalonians 1:3

...constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.

What is our hope?

1 Thessalonians 1:3

...constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor

of love and **steadfastness of hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ
in the presence of our God and Father.

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1 Thessalonians 1:3

...constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor

of love and steadfastness of **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ

in the presence of our God and Father.

What is our hope?

1 Thessalonians 5:8

But since we are of the day, let us be sober,
having put on the breastplate of faith and love,
and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

What is our hope?

1 Thessalonians 5:8

But since we are of the day, let us be sober,
having put on the breastplate of faith and love,

and as a helmet, **the hope of salvation.**

What is our hope?

Ephesians 1:4

God chose us in *Christ* before the foundation of the world,
that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

Ephesians 5:25-27

Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her...
that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory,
having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing;
but that she would be holy and blameless.

Ultimately, our hope is that Jesus will one day return, gather us all together, and present us to the Father as a holy and blameless people so that we will be in His presence forever!

How might this hope comfort your heart when you consider loss?

What's the Matter with Comfort?

Consider the matter of grief.

Consider the matter of hope.

Consider the matter of comfort.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

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



What is the Matter of Comfort?

How do we comfort one another, really?

1 Thessalonians 4:18

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

What words?

1 Thessalonians 4:17

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

But it is not these words *themselves*
that provide the comfort.

It is the truth, the reality, conveyed
by these words that gives hope.

In other words, if we are to comfort one another with these words, we will need to know the content and the meaning of these words.

We need to know the gospel!

1 Thessalonians 4:13

If we believe that Jesus died and rose
again...

Christ is the source of our comfort,
but it is Christ *in His sufferings on our
behalf* that is our comfort.

So, we comfort one another in the
same way that we receive comfort,
by speaking the truths of the gospel
in love to one another.



What is the Matter of Comfort?

How do we comfort one another, really?

Why are we tempted to refuse comfort?

1 Thessalonians 4:13

Do not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

We are tempted to grieve as those
who do not have hope.

Remember that we comfort one another
in the same way that we receive comfort,
by speaking the truths of the gospel
to one another.

But do the truths of the gospel
comfort you?

How will you know?

You will stop comparing.

You will stop complaining.

You will compose and quiet your soul.

Psalm 131:2-3

Surely I have composed and quieted my soul;
Like a weaned child rests against his mother,
My soul is like a weaned child within me.

O Israel, hope in the LORD
From this time forth and forever.

*You will take control of your emotions rather
than your emotions taking control of you.*



How will you know?

You will experience joy.

2 Corinthians 7:4

I am filled with comfort;

I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.

How will you know?

You will experience joy.

You will experience peace.

2 Corinthians 13:11

Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete,
be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace;
and the God of love and peace will be with you.

2 Corinthians 13:11

Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete,
be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace;

and the God of love and **peace will be with you.**

How will you know?

You will experience joy.

You will experience peace.

You will be grateful from the heart.

Psalm 28:7

The LORD is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusts in Him, and **I am helped**;
Therefore my heart exults,
And with my song I shall thank Him.

Psalm 28:7

The LORD is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped;

Therefore my heart exults,
And **with my song I shall thank Him.**

Why do we refuse comfort?

Due to ignorance or to doubt, we cling to the belief that there is some easier or better source of comfort out there somewhere.

Jeremiah 2:13

For My people have committed two evils:
They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters,
To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns
That can hold no water.

Why do we refuse comfort?

Because our flesh feeds on self-pity.

“Many a daughter of despondency has pushed aside the cup of gladness, and many a son of sorrow has hugged his chains.”

(Charles Spurgeon)

Conclusion

Are you prepared to grieve as one who has hope, as one who has received comfort from the gospel?

Are you receiving comfort *now* from the hope you have in Christ?