

# 1 Thessalonians

## I. Introduction

A. **1 Thessalonians 5:9-11** . . . For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep (*alive or dead at the return of Christ*), we will live together with Him. [11] Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

B. Pray

## II. Encouragement for living godly now in light of heaven one day

A. It is my experience that when Christians teach or write books about the return of Christ, they often deal with the signs and times surrounding His return, the tribulation, the rapture, the OT and NT prophecies, and the new heavens and new earth. However, here in **1 Thessalonians**, Paul's focus on Christ's return does not follow that pattern.

1. Instead, in chapter **3:12-13**, his focus is on urging us to increase and abound in love for one another so that at the return of Christ, we can be brought into God's presence, blameless and holy.

2. In chapter **4:13-18**, Paul is assuring us that it is not only those who are alive at Christ's return who will be taken up to meet Him in the air, those who have died before His return will also be taken up.

3. And in chapter **5:1-11**, Paul is exhorting us to be awake, alert, prepared, and sober in anticipation of Christ's return so that when He returns, He will find us living as Christians ought to live. And included in this exhortation is the reminder to live by faith, to love as we ought, and to find the encouragement to do so in the confident expectation of being taken up with Christ at His return.

B. So as you can see, most of Paul's teaching on Christ's return – here in **1 Thessalonians** – includes exhortations and warnings – exhortations about how we ought to live in light of His return, and warnings about failing to live as we ought.

1. Given that this is Paul's focus here in **1 Thessalonians**, it is possible that what we have talked about over the past several weeks has left you feeling like there is no end to the demands of the Christian life. And it is true, the Christian life is demanding, yet it is also rewarding – and one of those rewards is the gift of life with God for eternity in the new heavens and new earth.

2. Therefore, today we are going to look at some scriptures and words from hymns that I hope will encourage you to see Christ's return as the best thing that can happen and God's eternal kingdom as the best place to be – now and forever. One suggestion, as I read the selected scriptures and hymns, imagine yourself – or someone you know – experiencing and feeling the reality these words portray.
- C. **John 14:1-3**, “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. [2] 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. [3] If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”
- D. **What A Day That Will Be** – by Jim Hill
1. There is coming a day, When no heart aches shall come,  
No more clouds in the sky, No more tears to dim the eye,  
All is peace forever more, On that happy golden shore,  
What a day, glorious day that will be.
  2. There'll be no sorrow there, No more burdens to bear,  
No more sickness, no pain, No more parting over there;  
And forever I will be, With the One who died for me,  
What a day, glorious day that will be.
  3. What a day that will be, When my Jesus I shall see,  
And I look upon His face, The One who saved me by His grace;  
When He takes me by the hand,  
And leads me through the Promised Land,  
What a day, glorious day that will be.
- E. **1 Peter 1:3-5**, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, [5] who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”
- F. **Face to face with Christ, my Savior** – by Carrie E. Breck
1. Face to face with Christ, my Savior, Face to face—what will it be,  
When with rapture I behold Him, Jesus Christ who died for me?
  2. Only faintly now I see Him, With the darkened veil between,

But a blessed day is coming, When His glory shall be seen.

3. What rejoicing in His presence, When are banished grief and pain;  
Death is swallowed up in vict'ry, And the dark things shall be plain.
4. Face to face—oh, blissful moment! Face to face—to see and know;  
Face to face with my Redeemer, Jesus Christ who loves me so.
5. Face to face I shall behold Him, Far beyond the starry sky;  
Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by!

G. **2 Corinthians 5:1-8**, “For we know that if the earthly tent (*human body*) which is our house is torn down (*we die*), we have a building from God (*a celestial body*), a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [2] For indeed in this house (*human body*) we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven (*celestial body*), [3] inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked (*having no body*). [4] For indeed while we are in this tent (*human body*), we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed (*no body*) but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. [5] Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— [7] for (*in this body*) we walk by faith, not by sight— [8] we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”

H. **Finally Home** – by Don Wyrzten

1. Engulfed by the terror of tempestuous seas;  
When the waves before you roll;  
At the end of doubt and peril is eternity –  
Though fear and conflict seize your soul.
2. But just think of stepping on shore and finding it heaven,  
Of touching a hand and finding it God's,  
Of breathing new air and finding it celestial,  
Of waking up in Glory and finding it home.
3. When surrounded be the blackness of the darkening skies;  
Oh how lonely death can be.  
At the end of this long tunnel is a shining light;  
For death is swallowed up in victory.
4. So just think of stepping on shore and finding it heaven,  
Of touching a hand and finding it God's,  
Of breathing new air and finding it celestial,  
Of waking up in Glory and finding it home.

I. In **Matthew 5:10-12**, Jesus exhorts us not to fear persecution because “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

J. **Oh, That Will Be Glory** – by Charles H. Gabriel

1. When all my labors and trials are o'er,  
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,  
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,  
Will through the ages be glory for me.
2. When, by the gift of His infinite grace,  
I am accorded in heaven a place,  
Just to be there and to look on His face,  
Will through the ages be glory for me.
3. Friends will be there I have loved long ago;  
Joy like a river around me will flow;  
Yet just a smile from my Savior, I know,  
Will through the ages be glory for me.
4. Oh, that will be glory for me,  
Glory for me, glory for me,  
When by His grace I shall look on His face,  
That will be glory, be glory for me.

K. Peter speaks about the reality of a new heaven and new earth in **2 Peter 3:13** . . . “But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

1. And John confirms this in **Revelation 21:1-7** . . . “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. [2] And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. [3] And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, [4] and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.’ [5] And He who sits on the throne

said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' And He said, 'Write, for these words are faithful and true.' [6] Then He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. [7] He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.'"

L. **The Holy City** – by Charlotte Church

1. Last night I lay sleeping, there came a dream so fair  
I stood in old Jerusalem beside the temple there  
I heard the children singing and ever as they sang  
I thought the voice of Angels from Heaven in answer rang  
"Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Lift up your gates and sing,  
Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna to your King!"
2. And then I thought my dream was chang'd  
The streets no longer rang. Hushed were the glad Hosannas  
The little children sang. The sun grew dark with mystery  
The morn was cold and chill as the shadow of a cross arose  
Upon a lonely hill.  
"Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Hark! How the Angels sing,  
Hosanna in the highest, Hosanna to your King!"
3. And once again the scene was changed  
New earth there seemed to be. I saw the Holy City  
Beside the tideless sea. The light of God was on its streets  
The gates were open wide and all who would might enter  
And no one was denied.
4. No need of moon or stars by night or sun to shine by day  
It was the new Jerusalem that would not pass away  
"Jerusalem! Jerusalem, Sing for the night is o'er  
Hosanna in the highest, Hosanna for evermore!"

M. **Revelation 22:1-5** . . . Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, [2] in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. [3] There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; [4] they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. [5] And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of

the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

N. **That's When I'll Know I'm Home** – by Jeff Moore

1. There is a place more precious than any other  
This side of heaven's door.  
A place where we love one another,  
A shelter in time of storm.  
And though it's a treasure, this home's not forever.  
I long for the life that is waiting beyond
2. Where no one will ever be hungry or cold.  
Where no one will hurt or will ever grow old.  
No one will die and leave someone alone.  
That's when I'll know I'm home.
3. There is a place where truth will always be spoken  
And promises can be believed.  
A place where your heart can't be broken  
And loved ones will never leave.  
So if you are longing for a place of belonging  
The home that you've dreamed of is waiting for you
4. Where no one will ever be hungry or cold.  
Where no one will hurt or will ever grow old.  
No one will die and leave someone alone.  
That's when you'll know you're home forever  
No pain or disease. All will be equal and all will be free.  
True love will come and we'll fall at His feet.  
That's when we'll know we're home.
5. And finally we'll see with the darkness erased.  
Not through a glass, but then face-to-face.  
And that's when we'll know we're home.

O. It is a great comfort and a marvelous expectation to see heaven as a place to reunite with loved ones, to have a whole and healthy body, to have your mind renewed, to be free of sickness, pain, suffering, and loss, to have joy unspeakable, peace beyond imagination, love beyond measure, contentment that fully satisfies, genuine equality, and truly loving, mutually meaningful relationships.

1. There will be absolutely no prejudice, no partiality, no injustice, no mistreatment, no hostility, no abuse, no malice or revenge – because our old nature will be done away with.

2. We will become as much like Jesus as it is possible for created being to become. In fact, we will reach the fulness of the stature of our Lord. We will see Him as He is, and know Him as we are known. We will stand faultless – with great joy – before God. And we will be privileged to enter into a face-to-face, intimate relationship with God that will last for all eternity.
3. And for me, it is this last gift – a face-to-face, intimate relationship with God – that holds the greatest attraction for the return of Christ and eternal life, with the complete and utter death of my old nature coming in second.

### III. Conclusion

- A. What are you looking forward to or expecting or hoping for in the new heavens and new earth?
- B. To complete our look at the new heavens and new earth, I want us to share in communion – eating the bread and drinking the cup – as a tangible reminder of who made this gracious gift of eternal life possible, and what He did to make it possible.
- C. **II Corinthians 15:51-57** . . . Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, [52] 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. [53] For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. [54] But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory.” [55] O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting? [56] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; [57] but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.