

BD4: The Resurrection of Believers (vs. 17)

1TH 4.17 ~ *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.*

EX: We are warriors in the battle of the Lord. But our battle is not against flesh and blood, *but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (EH 6.12b)* Our battle wages on, and soldiers lives will be lost—either like the apostles and ancient martyrs (and current martyrs), or as we die in service today. But to the hurting hearts of the Thessalonians, Paul urged the church of the **resurrection of believers**.

1CR 15.20-22 ~ *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

AP: We cannot avoid death. We cannot avoid loss. But to the Christian, when we see our fellow soldiers pass in service to His kingdom, we can find, instead, comfort and encouragement knowing that the victory trumpet has been promised, and the Lord is preparing, even today for His final victorious march. And in recognition of that fact, Paul and the Thessalonian church could look **in memorium** on all those who went on before. And in that realization, Paul could also look forward to His own death many years later:

2TM 4.6-8 ~ *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

CONCLUSION – Encourage One Another (vs. 18)

GOVERNMENT/Memorial/Brigadier General Richard Montgomery – Part 2

Today, this monument still stands: a reminder of one of the first soldiers who died for this fledgling nation. As we reflect this Monday on those who died so that we can live free, let us also remember those who died not only in service for our nation, but in service of Christ's church.

HB 11.13-16 ~ *These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*

We are able to **grieve in hope**, reflecting upon the **foundation of our hope**—the resurrection of Christ, which stands as a **promise of Christ's return** and the coming **resurrection of believers**. And it is in light of all these things that Paul made the same statement to the Thessalonians that he makes to us, today: *Therefore encourage one another with these words. (1TH 4.18)*

INVITATION

RV 21.3-4 ~ *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

#638 [EXP-PE]

05/24/2025

In Memorium

PC ___ Pchd _____

1TH 4

THEME: Remembering those who've gone before us and taking confidence in God's promise of resurrection and eternal life.

KEYWORDS: Resurrection / Hope in Christ / Christian Living – Grief / Life after Death

TRN TO AC 17

INTRODUCTION

GOVERNMENT/Memorial/Brigadier General Richard Montgomery – Part 1

This weekend is when we remember those who fought and died in service to our country. It all began with the death of the first General whose death in service to the fledgling nation would stand, forever, **"In Memorium"**--memorialized in marble.

While many view today as a three day weekend, for those who served and lost loved ones in that service, it is anything but a **"Happy Memorial Day Weekend"**. For them, it stands as a reminder that **"All Gave Some/Some Gave All"**.

BACKGROUND

Dating the epistles of Paul can be controversial. But nearly all agree that Paul's letters to the Thessalonian churches are some of if not the earliest surviving letters written by the Apostle.

If you are planning a trip to the Middle East, you can visit Thessalonica today. Now the second-largest city in Greece: a vibrant hub for trade and business. Originally named **"Therma"**, it was renamed after the half-sister of Alexander the Great, and was only recently conquered in 168 BC. It was this city, made up of Greeks, Romans, and a strong Jewish minority that Paul encountered in **AC 17**.

AC 17.1-5 ~ *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ²And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." ⁴And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.*

But from the very beginning, the church in Thessalonica faced struggles: *But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, ⁷and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." ⁸And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. ⁹And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. (AC 17.6-9)*

Paul and Silas are sent out to Berea—where the Jewish people were more willing to accept the Gospel teaching. But the newly founded church in Thessalonica continued—despite the struggles and persecution. And as Paul continued to travel, his heart and mind turned back to that city he was forced to leave—and he continued to reach out and teach via letter what he was unable to teach in person.

I could spend months looking solely at the letters to the Thessalonians! But today, I'd like us to look towards the end of the letter. For, as we find ourselves nearing the

end of the letter, Paul turns to the biggest problem that was facing the hearts of the Christians in Thessalonica: a similar problem facing many of us today.

BD1: Grief with Hope (vs. 13)

ILL—Framed Items from Ryan (During the first couple years of Kara’s life, a close friend of ours grew suddenly ill; ended in a coma, and sadly passed) He was tragically young—and his was a life filled with energy and opportunity—a fiddler for an up and coming musical act: *The Locash Cowboys*—now known simply as “**Locash**”. From time to time, I’ll pass by this makeshift monument: a thing that stands “**In Memorium**” of our friend.

1TH 4.13 ~ *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.*

BKGRND: The young church in Thessalonica was struggling—whether by increased persecution or just the simple ravages of time, some of the brethren in the local church had passed away. And as they stood, reflecting on the death of their loved ones, their hearts were broken. This is something we all, unfortunately, understand quite well. If you haven’t reached the point of burying a friend or loved one before their time, I hate to tell you: that will almost certainly change. Our world is one where we continually find life cut short—the good die young. And our hearts, without fail, break at their passing.

Paul had heard of their broken hearts—likely magnified by his inability to stay and teach them due to the persecution causing him to have to flee to Berea. And he couldn’t bear for them to continue being “*uninformed*”, grieving in the way of their unbelieving fellow citizens of Thessalonica.

B.ILL—The Death of Lazarus (JN 11.17-22) (had heard of the illness of Lazarus, intentionally delayed arriving; by the time he arrived, Lazarus had died; Jesus speaks to Mary and Martha) *Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”* ²⁴ *Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”* **(JN 11.23-24)**

AP: From the beginning, Christ has presented His disciples with a bit of a paradox: **grief with hope**—there continues to be heartbreak and loss in this world. Our bodies break and decay. But to the Christian, Christ offers something amazing: a hope that extends beyond the grave. But what Mary and Martha didn’t understand that day, Christ would fulfill in a marvelous and momentous moment!

BD2: The Foundation of Our Hope (vs. 14)

B.ILL—The Resurrection of Lazarus (JN 11.26b-39) (Jesus weeps at the pain and sorrow of Lazarus’ loved ones; but then, He comes to the tomb and orders its opening—Martha is shocked: “the body will have decayed—it’ll stink!”) *Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”* ⁴¹ *So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.”* ⁴² *I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”* ⁴³ *When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.”* ⁴⁴ *The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”* **(JN 11.40-44)**

What an amazing moment that must have been! But eventually, Lazarus would die, again. And as the Thessalonians looked around them, they were seeing friend and loved ones die: even though Paul had preached life eternal! **How could this be? How could they experience grief with hope when their hearts were breaking?**

1TH 4.14 ~ *For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.*

EX: Paul pointed them to the resurrection of Christ—reminding them that even Christ died. But His death was not the end—He was raised again: and that resurrection stands today as the **foundation of our hope!** This is a similar struggle that the church in Corinth would face many years later. They also struggled with the loss of loved ones—Christians who’d “**passed on in active service**”. The conclusion of some of them was that they were “just like rover—dead all over”. But Paul corrected their misunderstanding:

1CR 15.12-19 ~ *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

AP: The Thessalonian church’s instruction had been cut-short due to Paul’s sudden departure. But he took it upon himself to correct it through his letter. Today, we have the gospel preserved perfectly in its entirety—bound in letter and encoded in 1s and 0s. And in it, we are reminded that we have the resurrection of Christ standing **as the foundation of our hope**. It stands as proof of the teaching of Christ, as well as all His promises!

JN 11.25-26 ~ *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*

BD3: The Promise of Christ’s Return (vs. 15-16)

Christ’s simple statement: “*Do you believe this?*” can prove to be extremely difficult in reality. When we look out at the world around us—its pain, its misery, and its death, **how can we respond in faith? How can we accept such a difficult concept as hope in the midst of grief?**

1TH 4.15-16 ~ *For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

EX: In this passage, we likely have one of the earliest surviving recordings of the **promise of Christ’s return**. Paul speaks with absolute certainty: a declaration of “*a word from the Lord*”. With this declaration comes a certainty: there will be “*a cry of command*” from the Lord, Himself, accompanied by an archangel and the victorious trumpet of God. And in that moment, yes: we who still live will be raised, but not before those who’ve “*gone on before us*”.

AP: In this image, we see every tomb, grave, casket, and urn cracked open—every buried dead brought forth and every ounce of ash reformed—returned and readied and resurrected to join the Lord in the air. Whether our fellow soldiers passed today our millennia before, the same God who breathed life into the dust in the Garden will again reform our temporary bodies into something wonderful and new!