



# 1 Thessalonians

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**Therefore comfort one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:18**

“Therefore” is given to sum up the words of verses 13-17. They respond directly to the words, “lest you sorrow as the others who have no hope” which are found in verse 13. Where there is no hope apart from Christ, there is total assurance in Christ. When a Christian is properly instructed in what Paul has said, there may be grieving in the pain of separation, but the grounded believer will not grieve with the sorrow of the sense of total loss. There will be no lingering question as to what has become of their lost loved one in Christ. Rather, there will be a sense of surety that death is defeated, and that the time of separation will come to a happy end.

This is why he finishes the thought with, “comfort one another with these words.” Actually, Young’s Literal Translation gives the correct sense by following the Greek which says, “in these words.” It is an admonition to us from Paul that we should repeat the words Paul has written when the need arises. In them comfort is to be found. The grieving soul can immerse himself in them as if in a blanket of assurance.

Life application: The closing paragraph of 1 Thessalonians 4 is one of hope and one of comfort. Even if we do not memorize the verses, we should memorize where they can be found. All people will inevitably face the loss of death, and for the believer in Christ, they will need a reminder that death is not the end of their lost love who was also in Christ. However, we need to never give a false hope. These words are not to be passed on when the dead was not a follower of Christ. We are to stand firm on the truth that only those in Christ will be included in Paul’s words concerning the rapture and our gathering together to be with the Lord.

**But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 1 Thessalonians 5:1**

τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων

Paul now enters into Jesus' equivalent of Matthew 24:36. What Jesus was referring to was specifically dealing with Israel's future prophetic events. The church was not yet formed, and the Gentiles were not yet being addressed. His words of Matthew 24 have nothing to do with the church. However, Paul's words do. He is writing what is considered doctrine for those in the church.

This introductory verse was written to eliminate any false ideas about church events which had already been claimed, and which Paul had to re-correct them on in His second epistle (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4). The timing of these event are, and will remain, unknown until they come to pass. They are things which the Bible states belong to God alone. It is pointless to make speculations about when they will occur because Paul clearly informs us that we are not in the know.

And so, to begin this section of his discourse, he says, "But." This is given to contrast what he has just laid out in the previous section – that of the resurrection and rapture of the church when we will be gathered together to meet the Lord in the air. A contrast means that it is the opposite of something. In this case –

- 1) We know that there will be a rapture, and the events which it encompasses are laid out in Scripture.
- 2) But...

This "But" is next detailed with the words, "concerning the times and the seasons." This phrase is a Hebraism. The first word "times" is a word which carries the sense of "time in sequence" as in a succession of moments. It is *chronos* (think of "chronology"). A person has a time to be born, he has a time to be graduate school, he has a time to be married, and he has a time to die. These events are ordained in a sequence, one following logically after another.

The next word, translated as "seasons," is the Greek word *kairos*. This word is more specific. It refers to things which come to their fullness, and thus they are "the right moment." This is comparable to Jesus' words of Matthew 24 when He says, "the day and the hour."

After saying this, he then says, "brethren." Paul is speaking only to believers. Unbelievers have no part in the words of Paul's letters, with the exception of leading them to a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Until that happens, the words do not pertain to them. They will not be included in the good things which have been prepared by God for His people.

Next he says to these brethren, "you have no need that I should write to you." The intent of his words is not that the information was useless or somehow superfluous. It was because he had already told them that the timing of the events was beyond the sphere of his instruction

to the church. It is natural for us to long for Jesus' return, and thus that curiosity would then otherwise turn into idle speculation if he didn't quell it in his audience now. Too bad we still don't pay heed. Instead, it is the duty of the church to concern ourselves with affairs of the church, and not attempt to pry open the box of these future events "which the Father has put in His own authority (Acts 1:7)." There Jesus spoke the same words which Paul now puts to paper with the flow of his ink.

The coming verses will explain this in a way which rapture date-setters will claim gives them the right and the knowledge to pry all they want, but exactly the opposite is true. Context matters, and the context is that we are to pay heed to Jesus' words of Acts 1:7, and connect them with Paul's words here. After doing this, we are to say, "God is God, and I will not attempt to beat Him to the punch." When the day comes (which involves a time known to God alone), we will not be surprised that it has come, but we will not have known that it was the day which He had ordained.

Life application: Setting dates for the rapture only causes harm. It is an embarrassment when it does not occur, it is an affront to God, and it diminishes the value of the church in the eyes of non-believers.