

"LET'S GET REAL: HEAVINESS AND HOLIDAYS"

A SERMONIC EXPOSITION IN 1 THESSALONIANS

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I. Introduction:

Hurting around Holidays...

II. Scripture Speaks:

The Hope for Heaviness in 1 Thessalonians

A. Real life and real pain

B. Real God and real heaviness

C. Real Savior and real hope

III. Conclusion:

Because of God grace in Christ, it's fitting to mourn,
and uplifting to hope as God's people in our risen Lord.

COMMUNITY GROUP QUESTIONS

Reflective Questions for You and Your Small Group

1. Thanksgiving just passed and Christmas is coming. Are the holidays hard for you or members in your family (or others close to you)? Why? Share.
2. What did you do for Thanksgiving? Was it difficult for you at all, because of the loss of a loved one, regrets from the past, sin in the family, etc.? Share about any stress, loneliness, anxiety, depression or challenges you faced last week around Thanksgiving. How can your Community Group pray for you or help?
3. On Sunday we studied 1 Thessalonians, applying its teachings concerning how we grieve in the midst of pain (specifically the loss of loved ones) but our grief is "[not like] the rest who have no hope" (1 Thess.4:13). Discuss how the message of the gospel changes the way we mourn and how the hope of the rapture of the church to be with Christ before the coming tribulation in the end times was a comfort for the saints in Thessalonica. (As a help answering this question it would be good to recall from the sermon [and/or consult from a solid study Bible like the *Ryrie Study Bible*, *ESV Study Bible*, *Zondervan Study Bible*, or *MacArthur Study Bible*] the background of 1 Thessalonians and the challenges/doubts/trials the saints there were facing that fueled Paul's writing of this letter to address and inform their concerns/lives/faith).
4. In studying 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, Bible teachers often get overly engrossed in the eschatology in the text and miss the practical nature of it. Yes, Paul is clearly laying out the eschatological distinctives of what we call 'pretribulation premillennialism' (which many current readers miss from modern denominational interpretations) and yet that's not the thrust of the text anyway. Paul is not arguing with modern misreadings; he's talking to real people about real life and the hope of a real future with Christ. Instead of being a systematic theological treatise about eschatology though, it is an immensely personal letter aimed at stirring hope, strengthening the church, stimulating worship, sanctifying lives, and confronting sin. With this in mind, read chapter 4 and 5 together, then focus on the practical application Paul gives his readers, namely, in light of Christ's rescuing believers from the Day of the Lord (pretribulationism) before the inauguration of His Kingdom (premillennialism), how should we live, serve, pray and persevere through the pains of this life?
5. Have you seen someone smiling and yet within the smile you recognized sadness? Have you heard someone laughing, though you knew the heart was not healed? This is a picture of what counselors call "repressed grief" (cf. Proverbs 14:13). Repressed grief occurs when a person has reason to grieve and needs to grieve, but does not grieve. In the sermon, we briefly touched on ways we repress or mishandle our grief/mourning. Discuss the ways in which you wrestle with pain, loss, hurt, grief/mourning and how Christ comforts you and is growing you as His disciple through it all.