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The Hope of Jesus' Return

FEBRUARY 19TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

The Hope of Jesus' Return

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Throughout history, people have debated what happens after death. This subject in many ways remains a mystery since the dead cannot tell of their experiences.

Yet God's Word contains an abundance of information about life after death. In today's verses, Paul explains what will happen at Christ's return—both to the saints who have died and to those still living. First, Jesus will descend from the sky in a way similar to His ascension. (See [Acts 1:11](#).) Then, God will resurrect the bodies of departed believers, whose spirits will have been with Jesus since the moment of physical death (2 Cor. 5:8). Next, Christians who are still alive will be transformed; they'll rise to meet Jesus in the air and will dwell with Him forever.

While we should strive to glorify the Lord every moment we're alive, it is important to be aware of these future events. The reason is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13: "So that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope." In fact, verse 18 tells us to comfort each other with the understanding of what will happen when Jesus returns. Knowing the pain we encounter in this life—from tragedy, loss, fear, and sickness—God gives Christians a glimpse of the wonderful future in store.

What a loving heavenly Father! He understands our pain and gives us such hope, comfort, and strength to endure life's hardships. Read the Scripture passage again—but this time, in place of the words "those who have fallen asleep," substitute the name of a departed Christian you love—and bask in the hope that the Father has given.

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Daily Devotional - Hearing the Call

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[Daily Devotional - Hearing the Call](#)

[Acts 6:4](#)

God has issued some dramatic calls to service. For example, Moses heard His voice from a burning bush, and Isaiah saw a vision of heaven’s throne room (Ex. 3; Isa. 6). But a spectacle is the exception rather than the rule. For most who follow God to the mission field, His call is a tug on the heart, persistently whispering, “How will they know God unless someone tells them?” (See [Rom. 10:14](#).)

It’s better if the Lord doesn’t have to use drama to get our attention. Consider Saul, who needed a serious talking to and temporary blindness to get him on the mission field ([Acts 9:3-9](#); [Acts 26:13-18](#)). I know I’d rather hear the Lord’s still small voice ([1 Kings 19:12](#))!

People can try to ignore the heart tug, block the ever-present call with activity, or satisfy it by giving money rather than themselves. Some say no outright. But the call persists. God's will is set and His plan is steadfast. Though we may run, we can't escape His call to obey ([Jonah 1:1](#); [Jonah 3:1](#)).

The road of obedience will certainly be marked with challenges. But difficulty is part of any life—at home or abroad, in mission work or a traditional job. Thankfully, the rewards of serving are greater than any hardship. Remember that Jesus promised Peter a hundred-fold return on his investment in the kingdom (Mark 10:28-30).

Carrying the gospel is a great opportunity to serve God. What better way to thank Him for saving us and writing our name in the book of life than to share that experience with others. If the Lord's still small voice is calling, say yes and see what amazing, life-changing work He can do through you.

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Daily Devotional - The Missionary Call

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Matthew 4:18-22

I've heard every reason you can imagine for avoiding missionary service: "I haven't been to seminary." "I can't preach." "I'm too old." "My family won't go for it." On and on the list goes. However, there are thousands of active missionaries who once thought the Lord couldn't use them, either. I often have the privilege of hearing their stories of how God turned resistance into enthusiasm.

People can offer God plenty of reasons why He shouldn't call them to spread the gospel. But His call is not issued for our consideration; He expects a response of obedience and surrender.

A believer is accountable only to say yes to God's call. It is the Lord's responsibility to equip the chosen for the work He's assigned. A personal plan has been mapped for each believer's life, and God provides the suitable personality and temperament. Then He adds skills that can be developed and the spiritual gifts necessary to fulfill His mission.

The Lord makes His call with wisdom and discernment. He knows why He created you and what you are capable of accomplishing in His strength ([Eph. 2:10](#)). Rejecting the invitation to serve Him is foolish. It would be like telling almighty God that He made a mistake. But surrender opens the door to a lifetime of service, blessing, and joy!

Mission work can occur near or far. You could serve at home by writing to prisoners, down the street by dishing out meals at a shelter, across the nation by providing flood relief, or in another country by translating the gospel. In short, a missionary calling is whatever God tells you to do.

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Daily Devotional - The Missionary Question

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[Romans 10:11-15](#)

At every missions conference, I tell God the same thing: “I’m available, Lord. I will go to foreign fields if You say so.” Until He instructs me to pack my bags, I’m going to keep on sending others to work among unbelievers in distant and even remote places.

In Romans 10, Paul asked a series of questions that can be summed up like this: How will the world hear about Jesus if you do nothing? God uses Christians to spread the word that His salvation plan is available to all. He put us in families and communities so we will mingle and share what we know. But some believers are called to carry the gospel farther than others. Those who stay behind are to offer prayer and resources for those who travel.

If you’re shaking your head and thinking, *Mission work isn’t where my heart is*, I have news for you: Every believer is called to missions as either a goer or a sender. That call comes in dramatic ways for some, but for most of us, it is simply a biblical principle to be followed ([Matt. 28:19](#)). What’s missing for those who don’t have a heart for such work is passion. Christians who share, go, and send are often excited about God’s message for unbelievers—and it’s possible for you to become more enthusiastic, too.

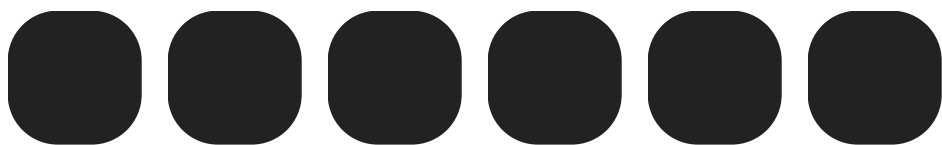
I challenge you to ask the Lord, “Am I open to going anywhere You send me?” Our roots in a community should be sunk only as deep as God wills. If you aren’t called to go, then

choose to be a sender. Offer your prayers, your money, and anything else that will help to put others on the mission field.

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Daily Devotional - Our Missionary Assignment

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Daily Devotional - Our Missionary Assignment

[Acts 13:1-4](#)

To understand God’s view of mission work, we can look at today’s passage. Paul and Barnabas set the standard when they obeyed God’s call to go forth. The local body of believers—those left behind to share Jesus Christ with neighbors and friends—equipped the men for their journey. They did so for the same reasons that apply today:

The spiritual condition of mankind. [Romans 1:21-32](#) describes this sinful world. Unchecked sin leads people down a slippery slope toward a depraved conscience and, ultimately, a darkened mind that cannot perceive what is right. Every unbelieving person is sliding on that treacherous path.

God's spiritual provision. Responding with grace to mankind's plight, the Father sent His Son to save the world. On the cross, Christ bore the sin of every person—living, no longer alive, and yet to be born. The offer of salvation is for all; God's grace is blind to race, creed, and color ([Rom. 10:12](#)). All who believe in Jesus are forgiven of their sin, and they'll spend eternity with Him.

The commission from Jesus Christ. [Acts 1:8](#) says that we receive the Holy Spirit so we may bear effective witness to those who need salvation. Notice that we don't simply begin at home and work steadily outward. People everywhere are waiting for the good news. The Word is to be carried far and fast.

The purpose of the church is to worship and witness. Some will go and some will send, but all are called to the work of spreading the gospel. This is not a suggestion; it is a command ([Matt. 28:19](#)). Believers living in God's will are all to be involved in missionary work.

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