

The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Thessalonians

In Chapter 3 Paul explains why he sends the letter

Paul has not been able to return to Thessalonika. So he sends Timothy to see if the faith of the Thessalonians is holding up under persecution and suffering. As soon as Timothy returns to Paul in Corinth and gives the report on their condition Paul writes this letter to the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 1: 3; 5:8 Theme of this letter

- Faith Hope and Love

3:6 Timothy comes back and reports that their faith and their love endure

- but what he doesn't report on is their hope
- Hope is what is missing
- They are lacking in Hope

1 Thess. 3: 5-6; 4: 9

Paul says, "You have no need of us to speak to you of faith and love ..."

4:13 "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope"

Two main issues:

1. What happens after we die?
2. When is Jesus coming back?
 - Until you answer these two questions there can be no hope

What happens when we die? We firmly believe and hope that

- Just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives forever,
- So after death the righteous will live forever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day.

Romans 8:11 "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you."

Cf. 1 Thess. 4:14; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14; Phil 3: 10-11; 1 Cor 15:12-14

The Commendation

Go forth from this world:

in the love of God the Father who created you,
in the mercy of Jesus Christ who redeemed you,
in the power of the Holy Spirit who strengthens you.

May the heavenly host sustain you and the company of heaven enfold you.
In communion with all the faithful, may you dwell this day in peace. Amen.

May the angels lead you into paradise; may the martyrs come to welcome you and take you into the holy city, the new and eternal Jerusalem. May choirs of angels welcome you and lead you to the bosom of Abraham; and where Lazarus is poor no longer may you find eternal rest. May saints and angels lead you on, escorting you where Christ has gone. Now he has called you, come to him who sits above the seraphim.

Come to the peace of Abraham and to the supper of the Lamb:
Come to the glory of the blessed, And to perpetual light and rest.

N, go forth upon your journey from this world,
in the name of God the Father almighty who created you;
in the name of Jesus Christ who suffered death for you;
in the name of the Holy Spirit, who strengthens you;
in communion with the blessed saints, and aided by angels and archangels,
and all the armies of the heavenly host.
May your portion this day be in peace,
and your dwelling the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen.

When will Jesus return?

1 Thess. 4:15-5:11; 2 Thess. 2: 1-12

Taken up into heaven and glorified after he had fully accomplished his mission,

- Christ continues to dwell on earth in his Church
- Through His Spirit
- Especially through the sacraments

Since the Ascension we are in the final age of the world

- And Christ could return at any time

But not before three things occur...

1. The Gospel has been proclaimed to the whole world and the full number of Gentiles is converted
2. The recognition of all Israel

CCC 674 states, “The full inclusion of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of the full number of the Gentiles, will enable the People of God to achieve the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (cf. **Romans 11:12-25**)

3. **The Church's Ultimate Trial will precede the end of time**

Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will **shake the faith of many believers.**

This persecution will unveil the “mystery of iniquity” in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth (CCC 675)

The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.

The Church will enter the glory of the Kingdom only through this final Passover, when she will follow her Lord in his death and Resurrection. (CCC 677 cf. Revelation 19:1- 9)

“The triumph of Christ’s Kingdom will **not** come about without one last assault by the powers of evil.” CCC 680

4. Then Christ will come to Judge the Living and the Dead

1 Thess 4:16-17 “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”

The Resurrection of all the dead, “of both the just and the unjust,”(Acts 24:15) will precede the Last Judgment.

5. The Last Judgment CCC 1038-41

The secrets of hearts will be brought to light as well as the conduct of each one toward God and toward his neighbor. Everyone, according to how he has lived, will either be filled with life or damned for eternity.

The two questions we began with:

1. What happens when we die?
2. When will Jesus return?

Until you answer these there is nothing to hope in

What is hope?

The **natural virtue of hope** is to desire and strive after some good you do not already possess

To be happy we must hope for and strive after natural goods:
Physical goods; knowledge; achievements ...

These alone are not enough since we were created to possess God.

- We need to possess God in Heaven (which includes the Resurrection of the Body) to reach the fullness of happiness

The supernatural virtue of Hope is

1. To **desire** union with God, holiness, all the joys of Heaven, the Resurrection of the Body, life everlasting.
2. And to **pursue or strive** after these things

By the supernatural virtue of hope we desire, and with steadfast trust await from God, eternal life and the graces to merit it. 1843

The Thessalonians were suffering persecution

- They are willing to do so if Jesus is coming back and will take them Heaven
- But when people start to die before he returns – they start to get nervous.
- If Christ is not returning (if it is all false) then we are not willing to suffer for a myth.

Paul is writing to strengthen their hope

- Strengthen their faith that these things are true
- Increase their **desire** for them
- So that they will strive after them

Do we have Hope?

1. Do we desire and strive after union with God and to become a Saint?
2. Or do we pursue the natural goods to the point of neglecting our pursuit of God and Heaven?

If you were dying and suddenly became aware that Christianity is a lie;

- A. Would you be angry and embarrassed that you have been fooled and have lived by a lie and that if you had known you would have lived differently?
- B. Would you say, That is a shame but I would not go back and live differently?

If you chose “B” then it must be that you did nothing to pursue something that you now know does not exist - you have done nothing to pursue God, you have no hope.

You know you have hope when you do things for no other reason than for Union with God, To become a saint, To possess the joys of heaven. Your life would look ridiculous without Heaven

If Christ is a myth then my life is embarrassing

I Cor 15:16-19

"For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all."