

## 15. Helping Our Children Learn to Comfort Others

In our last topic, we discussed helping our physical and spiritual children learn how to help new Christians learn to walk properly toward others. Today, we want to help them learn how to comfort others especially those who are in sorrow because they have had a relative that is a Christian die. 1 Thessalonians 4:18 says, “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” Today, we will be learning how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to comfort those who are in sorrow.

Some of the new Christians in the church at Thessalonica had died. This had filled the other new Christians with sorrow, because they did not understand fully what had happened to these new Christians. As a result, Paul wrote some key things to help these Christians that were in sorrow. These are key things that we need to help our physical and spiritual children understand so that they can learn to comfort other Christians that are in sorrow due to the death of Christian family members.

First, we want to help our children understand exactly what happens to a Christian when that person dies. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 says, “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.” In this verse, we see that the first thing Paul did was use a different word to describe death. He spoke of those who had fallen asleep. We see the reason for this change of words in 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 where we read, “So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” Here, we see that at the very moment a Christian dies here on earth, that Christian is immediately present with the Lord in heaven. We help our children understand that our soul and spirit leave the body and are immediately present with the Lord.

As our children learn to explain the fact that when the soul and spirit leave the body that they go immediately to be with Christ, just that message gives new Christians great hope because they realize that the person is with the Lord. The people without Christ have no hope because they are uncertain about what happened to their relative. In fact, Hebrews 2:14-15 tells us, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Christians have been set free from the fear of death while those without Christ are still in bondage.

Second, we want to help our children learn to explain what will happen at the time that Christ returns for the church at the Rapture. 1 Thessalonians 4:14 says, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” Here, we see that when Christ returns to take the Christians that are still alive to heaven, He will also bring the souls and the spirits of the Christians that have gone to heaven with Him.

In addition to bringing the souls and spirits of the Christians with Him, 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 also tells us what will happen to those that are still alive when Christ comes for the church. Those

verses say, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’” Here, we see that if we are still alive when Christ comes, our bodies will be changed. The new bodies that we will receive at that moment will no longer decay and will never die. In fact, for the Christian, both physical and spiritual death will be defeated at that moment.

Third, we also want to help our children learn to explain to new Christians what will happen to the bodies of Christians that die. 1 Thessalonians 4:15 says, “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.” Here, we see that the bodies of Christians will not go to heaven before the bodies of those Christians that have died. Many new Christians and a few that have been Christians for a long time have no idea what will happen to the bodies of Christians that have already died. Here, we see that the bodies of those who are living will not go before the bodies of those who have died.

Fourth, we want to help our children learn to explain to new Christians what the return of Christ for all Christians will be like. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.” Here, we see that Christ will give a great shout to us as He calls us to heaven. However, we also see that the bodies of those who have died will be raised from the dead and rejoined with the souls and spirits that went to heaven at the moment of death. As a result, we can help our children learn to explain that after the Rapture all Christians will be in heaven with their bodies, souls and spirits.

Fifth, we want to help our children learn to explain to new Christians that Christians that are alive when Christ returns will have their bodies instantly changed. They will meet the Lord with the same kind of new bodies that those who have died will have when they are raised from the dead. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says, “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” This verse shows that all Christians that are still alive on the earth when Christ comes at the Rapture will be caught up to meet the Lord. If we are still alive when Christ comes, we will meet the Lord in the air. Then, we will always be with the Lord.

Sixth, we want to help our children learn that helping new Christians understand what happens to Christians that die will bring comfort to the new Christians. 1 Thessalonians 4:18 says, “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” We help our children to realize that these verses in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 will bring comfort to all those who are Christians. They will realize that they will see their Christian family members that died either at the time they die and are present with the Lord, or at the time the Lord comes for all Christians at the Rapture. These words will bring comfort because they help Christians to realize they are only separated from the ones they

love for a short time and then will be with them for all eternity.

However, this message of comfort also produces another result. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” Here, we see that we can help our children to understand that the comfort Christians receive from the Lord at death is also the same comfort the Lord wants them to have when they experience any kind of trouble. The Lord gives comfort to us at times of death and then uses that same comfort to help us comfort others.

Christians do experience many different kinds of trouble and trials as they go through their lives. We may also experience persecution in our lives. James 1:2-4 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” Because the Lord gives us comfort about both our own death and the death of other Christian family members and friends, we are able to have comfort in any other situation. That is why James tells us here that we can count it all joy.

Happiness depends on what is happening around us. Joy depends on what the Lord is doing within us. Here, in James, we see that when we are tested by any kind of trial, we are now free to ask the Lord to work through those trials to help us experience the joy He wants us to have within our lives as a result of our right relationship with Him. The Lord promises to give us that joy as we yield our lives to Him. That makes it possible for us to look at these trials from the viewpoint of the Lord instead of the natural viewpoint.

Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us what happens as we look at those trials through the viewpoint of the Lord. Those verses say, “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’” Instead of those trials being a burden, the Lord gives us His comfort and His joy. James tells us the result of viewing these trials from the viewpoint of the Lord. We see that those trials produce patience in our lives. 1 Corinthians 13:4 begins, “Love is patient, love is kind...” (NASB) As a result, the comfort that the Lord gives us in any trial helps us to grow in love and grow to spiritual maturity and completeness.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to comfort others, they will grow in their love and become more spiritually mature. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to comfort others in any trial.