

**Sermon Series: The One Another Commands**

**Sermon Title: Encourage One Another**

**Sermon Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

**Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry**

**Sermon Summary:** This study looks at Paul's admonition for Christians to encourage one another. This one another command comes after Paul gives numerous reasons a follower of Christ has to be encouraged. Encouragement is the antidote for discouragement. Paul gives the ingredients for a Christian's encouragement. One of the main ingredients revolves around the *hope* we have of eternal life! Our hope is a blessed hope because it is secured by the promises of God! The second ingredient in the antidote for discouragement is found in our *belief* in what Jesus did when He first came to the earth. He defeated death and the grave through His death and resurrection. And we also believe Jesus will return a second time to this earth in triumphant victory to gather His children home. The third ingredient for the antidote to discouragement is found in the promises God has made to us concerning our own resurrection! Paul makes it clear that we will be raised from the dead and will be caught up in the air with the Lord and will be with Him forever more! Our hope and belief in the promises of God give us reasons to be encouraged that the world simply doesn't have! We are to encourage one another with these words!

**Full Sermon Notes:**

"There was another in the fire standing next to me." Remember the O.T. story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were thrown into the fiery furnace because they refused to bow down to an idol image of the King. The King sees them walking around in the fire and not burned up and then exclaims, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." Folks it was The Son of God! And then the lyrics say, "There was another in the waters holding back the seas." That was Jesus walking on the water and pulling Peter up to safety. "And should I ever need reminding of how I've been set free. There is a cross that bears the burden where another died for me!" And that would be God's Only Begotten Son! What was Jesus doing in all three of these scenarios? He was encouraging, protecting, and saving! That's what Jesus does! And He has called us to be His ministry partners to share the good news of what He does for those who call upon His Name! In fact we are commanded to encourage one another with that good news! Let's pray and we'll see why this is such a vital command for us to keep! Pray!

Before we get started today I just want to share something with you I just realized this past week. For the last three weeks we've talked about the one another commands to live in harmony with one another, to not judge one another and then last week, to agree with one another! I got to thinking how someone might get the idea, "Boy they must really be having some problems at Northshore Church for Pastor Larry to preach those three sermons in a row!" Truth is, we have such a sweet fellowship here at Northshore Church, and we want to keep it that way! Of course we're not a perfect church! So I guess you could say that I've been doing a little preventive maintenance, taking some preemptive steps to remind us of the importance of living in harmony with one another, not judging one another, and agreeing with one another by keeping the main thing the main thing! So let me just encourage you that I'm so grateful to

pastor such a loving and encouraging church that has really done a great job of keeping the main thing the main thing for the past 20 years! It's not always been easy, but we've really focused on reaching people with the good news of Jesus Christ and making disciples!! Amen! We're going to be celebrating that next year, with our official 20th anniversary as a Church. I also wanted to say thanks for the way you all were so gracious to encourage your staff last month during Pastor Appreciation Month. Thank you!! And that leads us right into our one another command for today...

### **Encourage One Another!**

You may be saying, "Yay, finally a 'one another command' that's not so hard. Encourage one another, now I can do that!" But let me encourage you, and caution you at the same time: we could all do better at encouragement! I know I just encouraged you about your encouragement, but I don't want us to become complacent. In this world, I just don't think we could ever over do encouragement! But sometimes we just get too busy? Sometimes we just don't think about it? Maybe we are so involved in our own world we don't take the time to get involved in another person's world. Maybe we don't realize how badly others need encouragement. Maybe we're discouraged ourselves and just don't feel like encouraging someone else! But we need encouragement today more than ever! Here's an interesting thing: encouraging others actually brings encouragement to the encourager. Is there anyone in here that could use some encouragement? And can anyone here deny that we live in a world full of discouragements? Let me give you a short list...

Tragedy at a Christmas parade, people still trying to recover from Hurricane IDA, the Covid virus that just doesn't want to go away, cancer, inflation, pain, depression, loss of a loved one, addiction, anxiety, political instability, racial division, armed conflicts, brazen crimes at all hours of the day, and that's not an exhaustive list by any means. You've got a personal list I'm quite sure. Paul was writing to the church at Thessalonica because they were facing discouragements that included persecution and loss of loved ones. The church at Thessalonica was hurting and needed encouragement! They were asking questions like people are asking today...

"Is there really a reason to have hope? Is there really a reason to smile? Is there an antidote for discouragement? One that really works? One that is real?"

I'm so excited to tell you today, the answer to all these questions is an overwhelming YES!! The opposite of discouragement is encouragement! And that's something that should be a part of our daily lives. We need encouragement and we need to be giving others encouragement. When you first think of forms of encouragement you probably think of things like this:

Wow, good job!

Wow, you're so talented! You've really got a gift there!

Wow, that's a great idea!

Congratulations on your achievement, you deserve this after all that hard work!

Come on, you've got this! You can do it, I believe in you!  
Things are going to get better!  
I'll help you, we'll get through this together! I'm here for you!  
Hey I'm praying for you!

These are all great and absolutely needed! Especially that last one! But is there more we can say or do? Is there anything deeper for us as Christians, followers of Christ when it comes to encouragement? Our Scripture text for today gives us insight into why followers of Christ should be greatly encouraged even in the worst of circumstances, and how we can encourage one another at all times with an encouragement the world simply doesn't have! Our Scripture today is the ultimate antidote to discouragement. Our text is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Let's read it now...

1 Thessalonians 4:13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

1 Thessalonians 4:15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

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

Okay, let's take this verse by verse and see if we can find the ingredients for the antidote for discouragement which by the way is encouragement.

### **Ingredient #1 - HOPE**

1 Thessalonians 4:13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.

Evidently several members of their fellowship had died. It was a devastating blow to the Thessalonica Church. They were asking questions. They were sad and confused. Nothing wrong with asking questions, but they were acting as if all hope were lost. Sometimes people say "never question God!" But I say that God is our Heavenly Father and He's a good, good Father and good Father's don't get angry when their little children ask them honest questions. Hey Kids, so glad you're here this morning! Do you ever ask your Mom and Dad questions? That's not a bad thing is it? Of course not! How can we learn if we don't ask questions! Let me tell you that God wants us to bring Him our questions! He loves it when we talk with him!! And let me tell you He is big enough to handle any question you might bring to Him! Now He might give you the answer immediately through a Scripture in the Bible, or through a Godly mentor, or

He might tell you to wait! Or He might tell you that you will understand it some day but for now, "just trust Me!" But some of the people in the Thessalonian church were so discouraged by their losses, they had given up on hope and Paul tells them this is understandable for people who have no faith, but for followers of Christ, this is unacceptable. You see, while we can ask God any question, like, why did this happen Lord? And we can be honest and even say we're not happy about the circumstances of a situation and maybe even angry about it and question away. But the one thing we should never question is this: God's love and care for us! He proved His love and care for us when He sent His One and Only Son, Jesus to die so we could live! And it is precisely this fact that gives us hope! What is the definition of hope? A Biblical definition is very different from the world's definition. Listen to the definition found in the Holman Bible Commentary...

"HOPE - Trustful expectation, particularly with reference to the fulfillment of God's promises. Biblical hope is the anticipation of a favorable outcome under God's guidance. More specifically, hope is the confidence that what God has done for us in the past guarantees our participation in what God will do in the future."

In other words, the world always has a big question mark after the word hope. As followers of Christ, we should have a big exclamation point!!! Why? Because our hope is secured by the promises of God Almighty! And last time I checked, God had never broken a promise! He's the ultimate promise keeper! Paul said he didn't want them to be ignorant concerning those who had died. If we lose hope when someone leaves this life, it is because we are ignorant of the true hope Jesus came to give us. It's not wrong to be sad, we still cry, we still miss the person who is gone, but if we know they had put their faith in Jesus as their Savior, we know where they've gone. Something is not lost when you know where it is! They've gone to be with the Lord! Here's what Paul said to the people...

1 Thessalonians 4:13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

People who have no faith or belief in the resurrection power of Jesus have no hope in death. Their grief is so much more devastating because they believe that death is the end, game over and they have no hope of ever seeing that loved one again. However, while we grieve and will miss our loved ones who've gone on to be with The Lord, we are confident we will see them again!

Remember these amazing verses concerning hope found we read just last week?

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 5:2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

Romans 5:4 perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Romans 5:5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

I questioned whether or not to read that passage again, but then I realized that it wouldn't be a bad thing, in fact it would be a great thing if we memorized those five verses! Why? Because Hope is a powerful ingredient in the antidote for discouragement. But there's more...

## **Ingredient #2 - BELIEF**

1 Thessalonians 4:14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

First of all we believe not only that Jesus died, but that He died for us. He took our place. He died so that we could be saved from our sin, from our despair, from our hopelessness, from our separation from God.

Romans 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 5:7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Romans 5:10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

As I said last week, religions of the world teach that righteousness and getting into heaven all depend on what you do and how good you are! It's your good works or service to that deity which brings salvation to you. And for some religions who believe in no deity, they believe to reach bliss or Nirvana, it all depends on you! In other words, you work for your salvation, your peace, your meaning in life. However, in Biblical Christianity, it's not what you do for God, but what God has done for you through Jesus that brings you salvation!

Ephesians 2:4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,

Ephesians 2:5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions —it is by grace you have been saved.

Talk about encouragement!! Paul tells the Church at Corinth...

1 Corinthians 15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

1 Corinthians 15:4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

1 Corinthians 15:5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

1 Corinthians 15:6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,

1 Corinthians 15:8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

1 Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Some people do not believe in the literal resurrection of Jesus from the dead and some people in our world today want to make those of us who do believe in the resurrection of Jesus out to be ignorant, unscientific, and just plain foolish. But let me encourage you with some words concerning our belief in the resurrection of Jesus. I believe this will encourage you greatly! I know it has encouraged me! From the passage we just read comes one of the most convincing reasons to believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. If you go back and study the history of many of the people listed as having seen Jesus, you'll find many of them ended up severely persecuted and some even martyred for their faith.

Now I know what some might say to this: "People of other faiths have been martyred for their beliefs, so this proves nothing." On the contrary! People do sometimes die for their beliefs, even false beliefs, however, it's beliefs they believe to be true. If they knew them to be lies, most sane people would not be willing to give up their life for lies! If the early disciples, and the other believers, knew that Jesus had not really risen. If they had stolen His body and buried it somewhere else, someone, under pressure, would have said, "Ok, I'll show you the body, just spare my life, my family, please let me live!" But they didn't. They were convinced Jesus had resurrected from the dead, they had seen Him, and they refused to deny that belief even at the point of death.

Not only the disciples, but James, the half brother of Jesus, who had been skeptical of Jesus during His ministry, radically changed after the death of Jesus. He saw something that made him change. And not only James, but Paul, who persecuted the church, had a change of heart after encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus, and God used him to write much of the New Testament. Oh and by the way, we know the tomb was empty! How? Even the enemies of Jesus admitted it was empty. They couldn't explain it so they claimed the disciples had stolen the body. When you take all of this into consideration it is very encouraging. We have such good reasons to believe!

And let me remind you of something I've said many times: I started out following Jesus by faith and faith alone! The night I turned my life over to Jesus my prayer was not a great prayer of solid belief, but one of hesitant faith. I said: "If this story of Jesus' death on the cross is true and

*if* He did that for me I'd be a fool to walk away from that kind of love! Jesus, *if* You're real and You can change this old sinner, I need You and I ask You to forgive me for my sins and help me to begin living a different life!" I'm so glad to report to you that while I'm not a perfect man, I've never been the same since that night! And I can tell you that I've seen God do so much in my life that I can't "not believe" anymore! I walk by faith and not by sight, but I can't help but proclaim and encourage others with what I've seen and I've seen God do so many things you could never convince me it was just coincidence! Believing all that God has done in my life was just coincidental would take way more faith than trusting that it was God's faithfulness!

Well, there's one last ingredient for the antidote of discouragement found in our text for today.

### **Ingredient #3 - PROMISE**

1 Thessalonians 4:15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

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

So we have the promise that the Lord Himself will come down from heaven! We have the promise that the dead in Christ will rise! We have the promise that those who are alive on that day will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air! We have the promise that we will be with the Lord forever! Folks, this is so practical! I'm so glad I have Jesus in my life here in this world, but I'm so glad this world is not the end and it's not all I have! Paul put it this way in his letter to the Corinthian church...

1 Corinthians 15:19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

1 Corinthians 15:20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Why would Paul say this? Because a huge component of our message is the eternal life that we've been promised in Jesus! Instead of a temporal hope we have an eternal hope! But how can we be sure these promises are true? Did you notice what backs the promise? Paul says...

1 Thessalonians 4:15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you...

God's Word is His bond! His Word is so powerful and can be trusted completely. Jesus had this to say about God's Word in the law...

Matthew 5:18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

And Isaiah wrote down these words from God...

Isaiah 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.

Isaiah 55:9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55:10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,

Isaiah 55:11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Isaiah 55:12 You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

Isaiah 55:13 Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever."

So God's Word is absolutely true and trustworthy! I don't know about you but I find that so encouraging! So listen again to the encouraging words Paul says in our text...

1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Folks, what a promise! What an encouragement! Jesus will return someday. If we are still alive, we will be caught up to meet Him in the air. If we have passed from life into death, we know that we will be resurrected just like Jesus. God will gather our molecules and reunite them with our spirit and we will live forever with our Lord in glory. In the end, death and the grave have no power over us.

Paul put it this way in his letter to the Corinthians...

1 Corinthians 15:51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—

1 Corinthians 15:52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

1 Corinthians 15:54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

1 Corinthians 15:55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

1 Corinthians 15:56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

1 Corinthians 15:57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Folks, if you can't encourage one another with those words, something's bad wrong! We have powerful hope! We have a belief in the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord! We know that death is not eternal sleep, but eternal life! We have the promise that we will be changed from living in this body that is prone to sickness, vulnerable to weakness, and subject to dying! The dead will be raised imperishable! We have the promise that Jesus will return someday! It's exciting and encouraging!!! Paul said these words at the end of his letter to the Thessalonians...

1 Thessalonians 5:8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Pray!