

I'll Fly Away!
I Thessalonians 4:13-18

INTRODUCTION:

- The New Testament calls it the “**blessed hope**.” The *Left Behind* end-time fiction series has made it a household word.
- “Rapture” -- “to catch up,” “to seize,” “to snatch away.”
- We’re talking about the “Rapture”—a word that doesn’t even appear in the Bible, but one that describes what will happen on that great day when Jesus calls His children home. *It comes from a Latin word that means “to catch up,” “to seize,” “to snatch away.”*
- Old Testament Hints
 - *God took him* (Enoch in **Genesis 5:24**)
 - *Enoch was translated* (**Hebrews 11:5**)
 - *Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind* (**II Kings 2:11**)
- New Testament Statements
 - *Blessed hope* (**Titus 2:13**)
 - *A sure and steadfast hope*, (**Hebrews 6:19**)
 - *A living hope* (**I Peter 1:3**)
 - *Caught up* (**I Thessalonians 4:17**)
 - *We will all be changed* (**I Corinthians 15:51**)
- **The** context of I Thessalonians:
 - These folks were so “**Rapture-conscious**” that they were worried about their Christian friends who had just died in the past few years. *Dog-gone it! Are they going to miss out on the thrill of the Rapture?!* The answer here is *No-way!* In fact, they’re going to beat us out of the starting blocks. The dead will rise first, then, we living folks will be caught up the join them in the air.
 - Think of the Rapture that ultimate **Disneyland E-Ticket ride** into heaven?!!!
 - Contrast **I 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.* In this context the problem was that there were influential voices in the church claiming that there would be **no physical resurrection**. In their culture there was a strong belief that matter was evil. So they believed in a spiritual resurrection, but not a physical, bodily resurrection. This idea showed up strongly in **Gnosticism**, which was behind the *Gospel of Judas*, that created a flap in the news back about a month ago.
- Today we’re going to see why God’s great Disneyland E-Ticket Ride ought to get our hearts racing!

I. WE NEED THE POWER OF ANTICIPATION

Do not...grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. (verse 13)

I Thessalonians 4:13-18, *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.*

*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**¹ him.*

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

*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 NOTE: Literally, *fallen asleep through him*—in other words, the believer’s hope of being in the presence of Jesus after death is made possible by Jesus. (Walvoord, *The Thessalonian Epistles*, 62)

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.

18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.

TEXT NOTES:

Loud command/Shout: Leon Morris: *The “shout” denotes an authoritative utterance. The word is found quite often. It is the cry made by the ship’s master to his rowers, or by a military officer to his soldiers, or by a hunter to his hounds, or by a charioteer to his horses. When used to military or naval personnel it was a battle cry, often one uttered in the thick of a great excitement. (Cf. John 5:28, tombs shall hear his voice)*

Caught up: Leon Morris: *“to seize, carry off by force.” There is often the notion of a sudden swoop, and usually that of a force which cannot be resisted.*

- *The time has come for **my departure**. (II Timothy 4:6)*
 - **II Timothy 4:6**, *“the time has come for my departure.” The word he used for departure is actually a military term. It refers to soldiers pulling up the stakes to march back home. For the average soldier, a departure was a matter of striking camp....We’ll fight more effectively when we visualize what life will be like after the end of the war. (Stu Weber, Spirit Warriors, Sisters, OR, Multnomah Publishing, 2001, 262)*
 - Hope so=know so
 - When **John Owen**, the great Puritan, lay on his deathbed his secretary wrote (in his name) to a friend, *“I am still in the land of the living.”*
“Stop,” said Owen. “Change that and say, I am yet in the land of the dying, but hope soon to be in the land of the living.”
- **IMMINENCE = AT ANY MOMENT**
 - *As you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. (I Corinthians 1:7)*
 - *Come, O Lord! (I Corinthians 16:22)*
 - *And we eagerly await a Savior from [heaven] (Philippians 3:20)*
 - *The Lord is near. (Philippians 4:5)*
 - *You...wait for his Son from heaven...-- Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. (I Thessalonians 1:10)*
 - *We wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ... (Titus 2:13)*
 - *Be patient...until the Lord's coming. (James 5:7)*
 - *The Lord's coming is near. (James 5:8)*
 - *The Judge is standing at the door! (James 5:9)*
 - *“Behold, I am coming soon!” (Revelation 22:7)*
 - *“Behold, I am coming soon!” (Revelation 22:12)*
 - *“Yes, I am coming soon.” (Revelation 22:20)*
- **WITNESS OF EARLY CHRISTIANS:** (from Renald Showers, “The Rapture of the Church,” *Israel My Glory*, April/May 1990, 15)
 - **Clement:** *The First Epistle of Clement, 23 (written around 96 A.D. by Clement, a prominent leader of the church at Rome who knew some of the apostles personally and probably is the one referred to in Phil. 4:3), “Of a truth, soon and suddenly shall his will be accomplished, as the Scripture also bears witness, saying, speedily will He come, and will not tarry.”*
 - **The Didache:** *...chapter 16, section 1 (written as early as 70 to 90 A.D. or as late as 120 to 180 A.D.), ‘Be vigilant’ over your life; ‘let your lamps’ not be extinguished, or your loins ungirded, but be prepared, for you know not the hour in which our Lord will come.”*
 - **Calvin:** Reformer from the 1500s and founder of Presbyterianism—*Be prepared to expect Him every day, or rather every moment.” “As He has promised that He will return to us, we ought to hold ourselves prepared, at every moment to receive Him.” “Today we must be alert to grasp the imminent return of Christ.”* Regarding out I Thessalonians passage, Calvin said that Paul *“means by this to arouse the Thessalonians to wait for it, nay more, to hold all believers in suspense...”*

- **Westminster Confession**, xxxiii, 3 (written by the Puritans of England during the 1600s) declared that men should “shake off all carnal security and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come.”
- **THE DEAD OUTNUMBER THE LIVING**
 - *The total persons ever born is about 85 billion.*
 - *The total persons alive today is over 6 billion.*
 - *The dead outnumber us by about 14 to 1.... **The dead will always outnumber the living**....*
 - *Living people account for 6.8% of all people.*
 - *Dead people account for 93.2% of all people.*
 - *Dead Americans... will not outnumber living Americans until the year 2030...*
 - *“The dead outnumber the living,” Harvard’s Nathan Keyfitz wrote in a 1991 letter to Justin Kaplan. “Credible estimates of the number of people who have ever lived on earth run from 70 billion to over 100 billion.” Averaging those figures puts the total persons ever born at about 85 billion. By these moderate figures, the dead outnumber us (by now we have swelled to 5.9 billion) by about 14 to 1.... The dead will always outnumber the living....*

Dead Americans, however, if all proceeds, will not outnumber living Americans until the year 2030, because the nation is so young....

Since there are at least fourteen dead people for every one of us, we who are alive now make up about 6.8 percent of all people who have entered the world to date. (Annie Dillard, *For the Time being*, NY, Alfred Knopf, 1999, 49)

- **Tony Campolo** preached a sermon called, *It’s Friday, but Sunday’s Comin’*. His Friday is Good Friday, the day Jesus was crucified. His Sunday is the day of Resurrection. Philip Yancey writes, *Campolo skipped one day in his sermon, though. The other two days have earned names on the church calendar: Good Friday and Easter Sunday.*

- *Good Friday*
- *Saturday, the in-between day with no name*
- *Easter Sunday.*

Yet in a real sense we live on Saturday, the day with no name....Human history grinds on, between the time of promise and fulfillment....Easter opened up a crack in a universe winding down toward entropy and decay, sealing the promise that someday God will enlarge the miracle of Easter to cosmic scale.

[NOTE: *The Day with No Name* is what we call the *Age of the Church*. **The two aligned mountain peaks illustration—McMillan Peak.** *The Mystery form of the Kingdom.* Even Jesus’ disciples had no idea that the Jewish Kingdom wasn’t right around the corner.

- **Acts 1:6**, “Lord, are you at this time going to **restore** the kingdom to Israel?”]

*It is a good thing to remember that in the cosmic drama, we live our days out on Saturday, the in-between day with no name. I know a woman whose grandmother lies buried under 150-year-old live oak trees in the cemetery of an Episcopal church in rural Louisiana. In accordance with the grandmother’s instructions, only one word is carved on the tombstone: “Waiting.” (Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1995, 274-275)*

II. WE NEED THE ASSURANCE OF PRECEDENT

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. (verse 14)

- “IF”--“THEN” **If we believe that Jesus...** A **first class conditional clause**: If and it is; assumed to be true.²
 - If Exodus, then Canaan
 - If lion and bear, then Goliath
 - If Midianites know my name, then I can win the battle (Gideon)
 - If God can raise Christ, then God can raise my friends and loved ones.

² Second class condition=contrary to fact; Third class=more probable future; Fourth class=less probable future.

- Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? (Acts 26:8) Paul before Fesutus, King Agrippa and Bernice...
- The Sadducees did not believe in the Resurrection. The Pharisees did.
- Cf. Paul in **Acts 23:6**, *Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the **resurrection** of the dead."* 7 *When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.* 8 *(The Sadducees say that there is no **resurrection**, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.)* 9 *There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. "We find nothing wrong with this man," they said. "What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"*
- Old Testament assurances:
 - **Job 19:25**, *I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes-- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*
 - **Daniel 12:13**, *"As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."*
- **Firstfruits imagery**:
 - In Old Testament times, when harvest time came, you would go out and gather a first sampling of the crop. And you would offer that as a sacrifice to God. It had in it the element of thanksgiving and the element of faith. You were **giving thanks** in advance for the whole harvest and you were **expressing faith** that there *would be* a full harvest.
 - **I Corinthians 15:20**, *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the **firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the **firstfruits**; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.*
 - **Romans 8:23**, *Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the **firstfruits of the Spirit**, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

III. WE NEED TO GET SOME QUESTIONS SETTLED

- What is the state of the dead right now?

2 Corinthians 5:1, *Now we know that if the **earthly tent** we live in is destroyed, we have a **building from God**, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be **clothed** with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are **clothed**, we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in **this tent**, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be **unclothed** but to be **clothed** with our **heavenly dwelling**, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. 6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 We live by faith, not by sight.*

- Implies that there is some new heavenly tent that is an immediate expectation after death.
- But my body is still in the grave.
- So maybe there is some kind of intermediate body—kind of like a **loaner car** while your wrecked one is in the shop.
- **Revelation 6:9**, *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. 10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" 11 Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.*
 - Notes:
 - They can **talk** and they have excellent **memories** and strong **emotions**.
 - They were able to **wear clothes**.
- What will my resurrection body be like?
 - Immortal, incorruptible
 - Christ didn't need to eat or drink, but he could and he did.
 - Note the wedding supper of the Lamb in heaven. (**Revelation 19:9**)
 - Christ's resurrection body had characteristics of both material *and* immaterial
 - Jesus could walk into a room without opening the door. (**John 20:26** *A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"*)
 - Jesus invited Thomas to feel his crucifixion wounds. (**John 20:27**, *Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."*)
 - Jesus built a campfire and cooked breakfast for the Disciples on the beach in Galilee. (**John 21:9**, *When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.*)
- Will cremation be a problem at the Rapture?
 - God made the first man from the dust of the earth so I think it will be no problem for him to re-create a man from the ashes of the earth.
 - Remember, some of the greatest Christians who ever lived were burned at the stake! [Polycarp and John Hus]
 - Besides that, it's not as if bodies buried in caskets are going to be intact. Even then it's a matter of dust to dust, ashes to ashes. The resurrection is a divine miracle of re-creation no matter how you look at it.
- When will the Rapture happen?
- Lots of disagreement: Pre-trib, mid-trib, pre-wrath, post-trib and also amillennial.
 - Where does the Rapture fit into God's prophetic calendar big events like the Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom.
 - Not on same level as the great issues of orthodoxy...
 - Pre-trib is the view that best fits all the evidence...
 - **Reasons** we teach the pre-Tri position:
 - There is a marked difference between God's program for ethnic Israel and His program for the Church. In the Old Testament God's spotlight was on the Jews. In the future it will be on the Jews. But today the spotlight is on the multi-ethnic Church. It shouldn't surprise us that maybe there would be two dimensions to the Second Coming of Jesus. One coming for His Church (The Rapture) and another coming to set up His Millennial (1,000-year) Kingdom in Jerusalem. This Age of the Church was unexpected by the Jews. It even surprised the Apostles. That's why the Apostle Paul calls it a *Mystery*. In the New Testament, the word *mystery* describes something that was **previously unknown**, but now is known because God has newly revealed it.
 - At the Second Coming--properly speaking--Jesus comes back in the middle of a great global war, the Battle of Armageddon, but there's nothing about a war going on in the great Rapture passages. That's why I think our **I Thessalonians** passage (Christian talk)

and the **Matthew 24-25** (Olivet Discourse/Jewish talk) passages are talking about different events.

- *Here is the chief reason why we believe the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation: the prophets have said that God will set up a Kingdom on earth over which the Messiah will rule. There will be mortal people in that kingdom. If the Rapture took place at the same time as the second coming, there would be no mortals left who would be believers; therefore, there would be no one to go into the Kingdom and repopulate the earth. (Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 143)*
- What will the Rapture look like?
I 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. 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.
 - NOTE: With a **loud command**. Cf. the way Jesus called Lazarus from the grave. **John 11:43**, *Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"* My pastor told us once that it was a good thing that Jesus said, *Lazarus, come forth*, or all the graves would have been emptied!
 - **Verse 16**, with a **loud command**. *There seems to be in this passage a clear analogy with Jewish marriage customs. For example, when the groom left his father's house on the wedding night he would conduct a torchlight procession to the home of his bride. She did not know the exact time of his coming, and it was customary for the groom's arrival to be preceded by a shout. This shout would alert the bride to be prepared for the coming of her bridegroom. (Donald K. Campbell, "What Next?" *Kindred Spirit*, Winter 1986, 19).*
 - How will unbelievers explain the disappearance of so many people?
 - Will it be visible or invisible?
 - Will society go into chaos?
 - Will it make 9/11 look like child's play?
 - **Magazine Section...**
- What will happen to my loved ones who are left behind?
 - I believe that on Rapture Day will be the greatest rush into the Kingdom in all of history. Tons of people will get saved. Note the evidence of **belief during the Tribulation**—Where did those Trib Saint Martyrs come from???
 - Jews will be saved: 144,000
 - There will **be a second chance** for those left behind in the Tribulation.
- What happens when we get there?
 - Will it be **scary**?
 - How can you be scared when you are loved? **I John 4:18**, *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.*
 - **Mary Ann Kariker's** letter. I buried her in Salem, OR, at age 43, on August 9, 1981: *July 7—Gail McKinney just called—all shook—feels guilty—she should be sick instead of me. "Do I fear death?" I have so much to be thankful for—especially the complete faith I have in God and His care and love for me and mine at this time. Whatever He has for me is only His best! Fear of death? Wow. It seems almost as strange as saying do you fear going home to your family? Death to me is the perfect graduation—continuation of life but so much fuller and better! Fear death? Would I fear getting to go on the vacation of my dreams? Maybe I feel bad having to leave loved ones behind, but if they're in good care and I know they'll join me soon—great! As for Heaven and all it holds—I have no idea—all I can know is the joy and peace He's given me here in this corrupt world is a small taste. It's easy to want to hang onto the things we have here—Ron, Joyce, Steve, Julie, Beth, etc. but I must give them up to Him and His love! Selfish reason for looking forward to Heaven? Right now I'm so weak and look forward to that perfectly fit body!*
 - Will I still have friends and family?
 - Names known at Mt. of Transfiguration: Peter, James, and John recognized Moses and Elijah by name. (**Matthew 17:4**)

- **Matthew 22:31**, *But about the resurrection of the dead-- have you not read what God said to you, 32 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? {32 Exodus 3:6}³ He is not the God of the dead but of the living."*
- Dives knew Abraham and Lazarus. **Luke 16:23**, *In hell, {23 Greek Hades} where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with **Lazarus** by his side. 24 So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send **Lazarus** to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'*
- **Hebrews 12:22**, *But you have come to Mount **Zion**, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose **names** are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

IV. WE NEED TO USE THIS INFORMATION

Therefore encourage each other with these words. (Verse 18)

- **Who needs the encouragement?**
 - **Sufferers**
 - *They were longing for a better country-- a heavenly one. (Hebrews 11:16)*
 - **Job 2:8**, *Then **Job** took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. 9 His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? **Curse God and die!**"*
 - **My funerals** are very upbeat.
 - **Adonirum Judson**
 - **Hebrews 11:1 and 6**, *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*
 - **C. S. Lewis**: *Five months before he died, C. S. Lewis wrote to a woman who feared that her own death was imminent. Lewis said, "Can you not see death as a friend and deliverer?...What is there to be afraid of?...Your sins are confessed....Has this world been so kind to you that you should leave it with regret? There are better things ahead than any we leave behind....Our Lord says to you, 'Peace, child, peace. Relax. Let go. I will catch you. Do you trust me so little?'...Of course, this may not be the end. Then make it a good rehearsal."*
*Lewis signed the letter, "Yours (and like you, a tired traveler, near the journey's end)."*⁴
- **Grievers**: *Not like those who have no hope.*
 - The late **Gene Roddenberry** was the creator of the *Star Trek* TV series. Gene was also an atheist. In one of the episodes, the ship's security officer is killed and the surviving crew members hold a memorial service in which they quote the words from an old Anglican funeral service: *"with the sure and certain hope of the resurrection."* *Yet there is one big difference. The line in the show reads,*
 - The *Star Trek* Version: *"with the sure and certain hope that she will remain alive in our memories."* (Luis Palau, *Where Is God When Bad Things Happen*, NY, Doubleday, 1999, 78)
 - *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.** 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.*

³ Exodus 3:6, God to Moses at the burning bush: *Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."*

⁴ [for ref see Alcorn p447]

- There is an exchange about death in a film called, *David Is a Memory*: “Where is David now?” a boy asks. “Well, he’s gone,” he is told. “Yeah, but is he somewhere?” “No, he’s a memory now. We will always remember him, and it will be wonderful, every time we think about him.” (Luis Palau, *Where Is God When Bad Things Happen*, NY, Doubleday, 1999, 78-79)
- **A letter of the second century**: Irene to Taonnophris and Philo, good comfort. I am as sorry and weep over the departed one as I wept for Didymas. And all things, whatsoever were fitting, I have done, and all mine, Epaphroditus and Thermuthion and Philion and Apollonius and Plantas. But, nevertheless, against such things one can do nothing. Therefore comfort ye one another. (In Leon Morris, *a pathetic little conclusion* to a letter which reveals all too clearly that she has no comfort to give.)
- The novelist **Pearl Buck** was a child of missionaries in China. She recalls how her infant brother took fever and died, as happened with so many missionary children. When friends attempted to comfort her mother by saying, “It is only his body that is gone,” the mother practically flew at them for it, crying out in her distress that she had conceived and born this little body, dressed and fed and cared for it, and that she loved this body. (Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, San Francisco, Harper, 1991, 83)
- **Servers**
 - If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, “Let us **eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.**” (I Corinthians 15:32)
 - **I Corinthians 15:33**, Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” 34 Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God-- I say this to your shame.
 - **Denying the resurrection destroys the incentives...for service....Why the bother serving the Lord or serving others in His name...? If death is the end, what great difference does it make what we do?** (John MacArthur, *I Corinthians*, Chicgao, Moody, 1984, 429)
 - **Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (Galatians 6:7-10)**
 - Cf. **I Corinthians 15:58**, Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.
 - **KJV**: be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...
- How do we encourage?
 - Not with **platitudes**, like one man’s comment, *Death is like sugar—it sweetens life and makes it precious.*
 - Not with **denial**: Ronald Reagan’s daughter, Patti, had a little black fish that died when she was a kid. Her dad threw a fish funeral for her complete with two twigs tied with string into a cross and a prayer. *I asked, ‘I know he’s in the ground but where is he now, where is his soul?’*

“And he said, ‘In heaven. Where he can swim and swim and swim, and he can see all these other fishes, and nothing will ever eat him, and he’ll live forever there in this clean blue water.’ And it was this beautiful picture that he painted. So I wasn’t sad for the fish. I had so much fun at the funeral I thought, can another one die? Maybe we can kill one! (Peggy Noonan, *When Character Was King*, NY, Viking, 2001, 155)
 - But with **faith**--We need the words. We need **God-words**.
 - Husband who doesn’t express love—*I told you I loved you on our wedding day, and if I ever change my mind, I’ll let you know.* That’s not enough. Our brains and emotions are leaky like a sieve and we need to be frequently reminded of the most important things.
 - We need to hear stuff again and again!

- Like a little kid, *Again, do it again!*

CONCLUSION:

- **Benjamin Franklin** wrote his own epitaph and it is engraved on his tombstone in the cemetery of Christ's Church in Philadelphia: *The body of Franklin, printer, like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding, lies here food for worms. But the work will not be lost, for it will appear once more in a new and more elegant edition, revised and corrected by the Author.*

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