

Monday, February 18 - 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. 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 4:13-14) For the Christian, sleep is a particularly apt metaphor for death, since death's finality and horror are removed by the assurance of resurrection. Some of the Thessalonians seem to have misunderstood Paul and thought all believers would live until Christ returns. When some died, the question arose, "Will those who have died have part in that great day?" Paul does not say that Christ "slept," perhaps to underscore the fact that he bore the full horror of death so that those who believe in him would not have to.

Tuesday, February 19 – 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. 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. 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. Therefore encourage one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18) The doctrine mentioned in verse 15 is not recorded in the Gospels and was either a direct revelation to Paul or something Jesus said that Christians passed on orally. When Paul says, "we who are still alive," the "we" doesn't necessarily mean that Paul thought that he would be alive then. The people he was writing to had evidently been concerned that those among them who died would miss their place in the great events when the Lord comes, and Paul assures them this not be the case. The primary purpose for Paul in writing this is to not give a chronological event listing but to urge mutual encouragement.

Wednesday, February 20 – Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3) Efforts to determine the date of Christ's return are foolish. Don't be misled by anyone who claims to know. We are told her that no one knows and that even believers will be surprised. The Lord will return suddenly and unexpectedly, warns Paul, so be ready! Because no one knows when Jesus will come back to earth, we should be ready at all times. Suppose he were to return today? How would he find you living? Are you ready to meet him? Live each day prepared to welcome Christ.

Thursday, February 21 – Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 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 5:4-8) Paul challenges the believers to stay alert as people who “belong to the day” as they look forward to the return of Christ. Christians are to be “sober” and spiritually alert by wearing the spiritual armor God has provided for our protection. Salvation covers our minds from the piercing arrows of the enemy’s lies, and faith shields us from doubt and defeating thoughts. Is your armor on? Never forget that you are in a spiritual, and you must wield your spiritual weapons as well. One of the main battlefields is in our minds - the enemy of our souls loves to attack our thinking, so we must protect ourselves daily with the Truth and stand strong in the power of God’s might.

Friday, February 22 – For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11). As you near the end of a long race, your legs ache, your through burns, and your whole body cries out for you to stop. This is when friends and fans are most valuable. Their encouragement helps you push through the pain to the finish line. In the same way, Christians are to encourage one another. A word of encouragement offered at the right moment can be the difference between finishing well and collapsing along the way. Look around you. Be sensitive to others’ need for encouragement, and offer supportive words or actions.