

The Rapture Of The Church

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

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In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul 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. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 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...”—or “go before”—“...those who are asleep. 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. Then we...”—Paul includes himself—“...who are alive and remain shall be caught up...”—there’s our word “harpodzo” or “raptured”—“...together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” Then Paul closes with, “Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

In 2 Peter 3:3-4, Peter says, “Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep...”—or literally “died”—“...all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” So they were saying, “There’s no ‘coming again’ of the Lord! It hasn’t happened yet. It won’t happen in the future.” They were mocking the concept or the doctrine of the return of Jesus Christ. There will also be mockers in the last days, and those mockers have arrived.

As Christians, we believe in the Incarnation, that God became a man in Christ; we believe in the Crucifixion, that Jesus died on the Cross for our sins; we believe in the Resurrection, that Jesus rose victoriously and bodily from the grave; we believe in the Ascension, that Christ ascended back into heaven; and we believe in the exaltation, that Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

But that’s not the end of the story; we also believe in the return of Jesus Christ. He is coming again. We focus so much on His birth and on His death and on His Resurrection, but we forget that He is ascended, exalted and will come again.

Jesus promised to come again. In John 14:2-3, Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

I believe His promise. Jesus always keeps His promises. If He promised He is preparing a place and He promised that He would come to “receive” us, I believe that’s a revelation of the rapture of the church. He said that He will take us to His “Father’s house,” and I believe His promise will be fulfilled.

This is what we call “the rapture of the church.” It was first revealed in John 14 by our Lord Himself. Then it was revealed by Paul the Apostle as the “mystery” of the body of Christ being

“caught up to meet the Lord in the air.”

But there are some who say that the word “rapture” is not in the Bible, so they therefore argue that the doctrine of the rapture is not Biblical. I would also argue that the Bible does not have the word “Trinity” in it, but we believe in the Trinity. The word “providence” does not appear in the Bible, but we believe in the providence of God. So the fact that the word “rapture” does not appear in the Bible doesn’t mean it’s not a doctrine found in the Bible.

I would also argue that if you were reading from a Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible and came to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, you would find the word “raptus” or “rapture,” which means “to be caught up” or “to be taken up by force.” So it is a word to express the concept that Jesus is going to “snatch us up” or we “shall be caught up...to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

Others say that the early church fathers did not believe in or preach or teach the rapture of the church. One of the big arguments commonly heard today against the rapture is that it’s a modern doctrine that started with John Darby and the dispensationalists and really isn’t taught in the Bible and wasn’t taught by the church fathers. But it’s interesting that if you read all the writings of the church fathers, they write about the imminent return of Christ. They weren’t looking for the Antichrist, they weren’t looking for the signs of His Second Coming; they were looking for an imminent return of Christ at any moment. That doctrine of imminency supports the doctrine of the rapture, because nothing has to happen before the Lord raptures His church to heaven. So the fact that the early church fathers did not specifically use or teach the term “rapture” is not necessarily an issue.

Remember that the Bible is the authority, not church history. Church history is important to consult to see the doctrines of the church, but the authority lies in the Scriptures, not in the early church fathers, in modern preachers or in church trends throughout history. That’s very important to realize.

The doctrine of the rapture is described in 1 Corinthians 15 by Paul. And in verse 51, it is known as “a mystery.” Then in Ephesians, he describes what this mystery is. It was something that was hidden in ages past or concealed but now has been revealed to the people of God. Given that truth, I don’t believe the rapture is in the Old Testament; it’s a New Testament mystery. Also the church, the body of Christ, is referred as “a great mystery.” In Ephesians 5:32, Paul said, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” So the church and the rapture are hidden in the Old Testament, but the rapture is clearly revealed in the New Testament by our Lord and by Paul the Apostle.

I want to give you several verses about the rapture. It is clearly taught by Jesus in John 14 and by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. Paul taught in chapter 15 on the Resurrection of Christ, and the rapture involves the resurrection of the saints who have died before the Lord returns. And our passage today, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, is the classic passage on the rapture. Also in Philippians 3:20-21, Paul says, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly

wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body.” Here Paul is talking about the Lord coming for the church and the resurrection of the dead and the translation of the living that will take place during the rapture.

Now I want to look at five facets of the rapture. Number one is the problem of the rapture, verse 13. Paul 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.” This verse gives us the background and the historical setting from which Paul wrote his words.

Many verses and paragraphs in the Bible can be understood if you know why they were written, what the circumstances surrounding them were. We know that in chapter 1, Paul wrote a commendation to the believers in Thessalonica; in chapters 2-3, he gave his vindication, defending himself against the critics who attacked his ministry; and in chapters 4-5, Paul is writing instruction or admonition. So from that we get this direct teaching of Paul in our passage today.

Many times Paul’s teaching was based on a problem, a concern or an issue that had arisen in the church; in this case, it was in Thessalonica. Thus, Paul starts in chapter 4 by admonishing them to walk in sexual purity, then moved to the section saying they had to be quiet, mind their own business and get to work. Now in chapter 4, we pick up the issue in which they were concerned about their loved ones who had died, but the rapture hadn’t happened yet. So the believers were ignorant about this.

In verse 13, there are four, key words: “ignorant...asleep...sorrow...hope.” About the word “ignorant,” someone said, jokingly, that this is the largest Christian denomination in America—the ignorant brethren. There truly is a lot of ignorance in the church when it comes to the doctrine of the rapture of the church. And then in the years I’ve been a pastor, I’ve seen a decline in understanding of the rapture, and especially on the issue that the rapture is distinct from the Second Coming, and the rapture will come before the seven years of the tribulation. These teachings have been abandoned by so many today.

What were the Thessalonian believers ignorant about? What was happening? They had been taught, in the few weeks that Paul had been in Thessalonica, that Jesus was coming back. They were pumped up and excited about that; so much so that many had quit their jobs and were sponging off other believers.

But some of the believers in the church had died, so some friends and family were panicking and were worried about those dead believers when Jesus comes back. They believed those who had died would have a disadvantage compared to those who were alive. They thought their dead believers wouldn’t get raptured; they were going to miss out. Basically they thought that their loved ones who had died in Christ were going to miss out on the rapture. So Paul said, “No, no, no! They’re going to be resurrected first!” He said, “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.” So that was what they were ignorant about: what happens after death.

I would say that the most common question I have gotten from Christians is what happens when a believer dies. I don’t understand that, because the Bible is crystal clear on the issue. But there are so many people who are confused on what happens the moment we die. In 2 Corinthians 5:8, it says, “To be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord.” Paul here is talking about Christians. When Paul said this, it was early in the church’s growth. They were just coming to an understanding of this truth.

The moment I leave my physical body—and that’s what death is; it’s a separation of the soul and spirit, the immaterial part of man, from the body. Then I, as a Christian, am in the presence of the Lord. We go from life to life; we step from this world to the next world, and we will be looking at Jesus face to face. You might title this whole passage Face to Face with Jesus. We step out of our tent and move into the presence of the Lord.

Also, in Philippians 1:21, Paul says, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” So when you die, you’re not sleeping spiritually—there’s no doctrine of “soul sleep” here. You don’t become a firefly waiting for God to recreate you. You don’t cease to exist. You’re vitally alive in the presence of the Lord. “For to me...to die is gain.” Then in verse 23, Paul says, “For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” So Paul says that when he departs, he’ll “be with Christ, which is far better.”

Everything Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is to comfort grieving, sorrowing Christians about their loved ones who had died in Christ. He said, “I do not want you to be ignorant” about where they are. When someone dies in Christ, you haven’t lost them; you know right where they are. They’re with Jesus Christ. What a blessing that is. So we don’t weep for them; we weep for us who are alive. They’re in the presence of the Lord. They don’t have to deal with all the problems of this world. So they were ignorant and Paul wanted to correct that.

The second word is “asleep.” It is used a couple of times in our passage. Paul said, “those who have fallen asleep.” That could confuse somebody, because it’s a metaphor. It’s a metaphor for death. “Asleep” is referring to their physical death. And it has interesting implications. First, it’s only used for Christians. Only Christians in the Bible are referred to as being “asleep” when they die. Second, it refers only to the physical body; it never refers to the soul or spirit.

The Seventh Day Adventists believe in the doctrine of “soul sleep.” They believe that when a Christian dies, he or she just ceases to exist. They go to sleep and then at the resurrection, they’ll be reawakened. So when your loved ones die, they aren’t in a conscious state in the presence of the Lord. They’re asleep and they’ll be recreated. But souls and spirits don’t need to sleep, because they don’t have bodies that get tired and need to sleep. Souls and spirits don’t need to lay down to take a nap.

Warren Wiersbe said that he was going to take a vacation, and one of his congregants

complained that “The devil never takes a vacation, so why was the pastor taking one?” His retort to that was, “The devil doesn’t have a body; I do. It needs rest.”

So “asleep” here is referring only to believers, it’s only referring to the body and the implication—this is so important—is that their bodies are only sleeping; therefore, it’s a temporary state. They will be awakened. Praise God!

The number one passage I like to read at a cemetery when I’m officiating at a funeral and there is an open grave is this very verse we’re reading right now. You don’t need to sorrow like those who have no hope about those who are sleeping. The word “cemetery” means “resting place.” We lay them in their graves resting, waiting for their resurrection.

But they are “with the Lord.” Don’t get confused here. Their bodies are sleeping in the graves, but their soul and spirit are in the presence of the Lord. It’s called “the intermediate state”; they haven’t gotten their new, glorified bodies yet, which they’ll get when they’re resurrected at the rapture. Now their bodies are sleeping in the dust of the earth, waiting for that resurrection. So it’s just a temporary sleep.

When someone says they’re going to take a nap, you don’t start wailing, weeping and crying and say, “I’m never going to see you again!” But I know that when some people sleep, they look like they’re dead. I traveled with someone once who could immediately go to sleep on his back when his head hit the pillow. You couldn’t see him breathing, moving or groaning; he looked like he was dead. He didn’t move or twitch until the alarm went off in the morning. I thought, That’s not fair! But he wasn’t dead; he was just sleeping. And when we go to sleep, we all have the expectation that we will arise from our nap.

An illustration of this is in John 11. When Jesus found out Lazarus had died, He said, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps.”

So the disciples said, “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.”

“Then Jesus said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead.’”

So Jesus used the metaphor sleep for Lazarus’ death. Jesus knew that in a few hours He would awaken Lazarus from his “nap.” Jesus would wake him up.

When Jesus said, “Lazarus, come forth!” and Lazarus came out of the grave, that was a picture of what will happen at the rapture. Graves will open all over the world, “and the dead in Christ will rise first.” What an exciting truth this is: the resurrection of our bodies!

So the Thessalonian dead in Christ were only sleeping.

The third word is “sorrow.” Paul doesn’t say, “Don’t sorrow,” but he said, “You don’t need to sorrow as others who have no hope.” Your heart is broken, you’re sad because of the separation, you’ve laid your loved one in the grave, but you have hope in the midst of your

sorrow. Even Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus before He raised him from the dead.

The fourth word is “hope.” So the believers start off ignorant—they don’t understand “sleep”—so they are filled with sorrow without hope. But Paul says, “No; you have hope.” It’s not a hopeless sorrow. The believer, even in death, has hope beyond the grave.

Now we move from the problem of the rapture to, secondly, the pillars of the rapture, verses 14-15a. Paul made the statement in verse 13 that they should not “sorrow as others who have no hope.” Now here’s the reason: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” He’s referring to the believers who have died in Christ.

Every word of these verses is important. We shouldn’t be worried about those who have died, because they’ll be coming back with Jesus to meet us “in the clouds” at the rapture. We’ll see them again. How glorious! Then in verse 15, Paul says, “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord.”

There are three pillars for the hope of the rapture, for hope beyond the grave. The first one is the death of Christ, verse 14. “For if we believe that Jesus died....” That’s the foundation of our hope: Jesus died on the Cross for our sins.

This verse says, “if we believe,” but the word “if” is what is called “a first-class condition assuming the fact.” So it could be translated, “since we believe....” Paul wasn’t questioning whether they believed that Jesus died on the Cross; he was affirming that Jesus died on the Cross for our sins.

Christians believe that Jesus’ death was a substitution for our sins; that He came in a body so He could die in my place and in your place. My sins and your sins were placed on Christ, who paid the penalty on the Cross. So He was our substitute; He died in our place. His death was a substitutionary death, paying the price for mankind’s sin.

Then notice the second pillar of the believer’s hope: the Resurrection of Christ, verse 14. “Jesus...rose again.” You have the death of Christ, and you have the Resurrection of Christ. Christians believe that Jesus died, was buried and three days later He rose from the grave.

So why should we fear death? We shouldn’t. Jesus took the sting out of death. Jesus died in our place. Jesus conquered sin and the grave and conquered over death.

Sometimes people get confused and ask, “Well, didn’t other people get raised from the dead?” Yes; but they got raised from the dead back into their mortal bodies, only to die again. Jesus rose from the dead like no other person has ever done and hasn’t done since; He rose in an immortal, eternal body. So Jesus’ Resurrection conquered sin, death and the grave.

And the Bible says that Jesus became “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Christ is the first in order or the prototype of our resurrection bodies. What a blessed truth that is. His

death and Resurrection is the foundation for all our hope.

The third pillar of the believer's hope is the revelation from Christ, verse 15. "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord." This is called "Biblical revelation." We can't know something unless God reveals it. What lies beyond death is revealed to us as God's Word. We don't know about the coming again of the Lord unless He reveals it to us.

John 14 would come into play where Jesus reveals that He is coming again. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-54, Paul shows us "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.'" Paul wrote that by revelation from the Lord. So the Bible is God's revelation to us. That is very important for us to remember.

And this is only for those who are in Christ, the church. These three pillars are the foundation of our hope.

Now we go from the problem of the rapture and the pillars of the rapture to, thirdly, the participants of the rapture, verse 15b. "We who are alive and remain..."—that's the first group—"...until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede..."—here's the second group—"...those who are asleep." These are the two groups that will participate in the rapture: those who are alive and those who are dead. The Christians who have died aren't going to miss the rapture; they're not going to be at a disadvantage. Those who are living at the time aren't going to miss it; they'll be "caught up...to meet the Lord in the air."

So the first group is those "who are alive" in Christ—"we who are alive and remain" or those who are living at the time of the rapture. Paul says "we," so he includes himself in this group. That indicates that Paul believed in the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Thessalonians 5, we'll study the relationship of the rapture to the tribulation and the end times. We'll see evidence from the Bible that the rapture happens before the tribulation, so that is why Paul says in chapter 5, verses 1-2, "But concerning the times..."—that is, "the chronology"—"...and the seasons..."—that is, "the characteristics"—"...brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night."

So those who are alive in Christ will participate in the rapture. That indicates that Paul is looking for Christ's imminent return.

Then the second group is "those who are asleep." So if a Christian dies before the rapture, their soul and spirit go immediately to be with Christ—"to be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord"—but their physical bodies will be resurrected at the time of the rapture to be reunited with their soul and spirit. You will see them and know them in heaven. Even if their

bodies were cremated or been given a watery grave at their physical death, it's no problem for God. "There is nothing too hard for You." If all power belongs to God, it's not reconstruction; it's resurrection. He will raise those bodies from the dead, so don't worry about the dead in Christ.

Now the question is, "Will all Christians living at the time of the rapture be taken?" The answer is "Yes." Those who have previously died, their soul and spirits are already with the Lord, and they'll come back with the Lord to meet those who are alive "in the clouds." It's the bodies of the dead believers that will be resurrected at that time.

I don't believe what some believe in that's called "the partial rapture." I don't believe that the rapture is only for "super-spiritual, deeper-life" saints. Some preachers say, "If you're not really walking with God, if you're not walking in holiness and you're not really looking up..." I literally heard one preacher say that if you're not physically looking up at the time of the rapture, you won't go. That's not right.

If you are saved, if you are a Christian, if you have been born again, if you are in Christ, you will go up in the rapture. His righteousness has been imputed to you; positionally you are perfectly righteous in Christ.

Now don't misinterpret what I'm saying; that you can go out and live a sinful life, do whatever you want and expect to get raptured. If you have that mentality, then you need to make sure you're saved. If you're really born again, you won't want to do those things. Jesus changes your heart and your desires. There's been a transformation in your life. So if you want to live in sin, I question your salvation. You're either "a saint or you ain't." Jesus is going to take his whole bride or none of the bride. The bride of Christ is going to be "caught up...to meet the Lord in the air."

Now we move to the fourth facet of the rapture. We go from the problem to the pillars to the participants to the plan of the rapture, verses 16-17. This is where it is broken down into how it will happen. "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. 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."

I want to break this plan into four categories. First is the return. And there are five things about the return. First of all, "the Lord Himself" is coming back; He's not sending a representative. In Acts 1, two angels appeared when the disciples saw Jesus ascend toward heaven. One of the angels asked them, "Why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." What great words.

The very same Jesus, who we read about in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, is coming for you. It won't be someone else. It won't be a representative. He's not going to send some angel. He's going to come for us; we're His bride. In 1 Thessalonians 1:10, it says that we "wait for His

Son from heaven.”

The second thing about His return is that He will “descend from heaven.” John 14:2 says, “In my Father’s house.” He’s been there preparing a place, and He’s back coming from heaven.

The third part of the plan is that there will be “a shout.” This word “shout” is the word “command.” It’s a military term. He’s going to command us to come up to Him. I think that’s fascinating.

Fourth, there will be “the voice of an archangel.” We don’t know if it’s Michael or another archangel.

And fifth, there will be “the trumpet of God.” In those days, they used trumpets to bring people together, to celebrate and to give marching orders.

But don’t confuse this “trumpet of God” with the seven trumpet judgments of Revelation or the last trump in the tribulation period. This is a totally distinct and separate trumpet.

It’s interesting that in Revelation 4:1, John said, “The first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here.’” And I believe that’s when the rapture happens, in Revelation 4:1, when that voice like a trumpet says, “Come up here.”

Then the second category of the plan of the rapture is the resurrection. We’ve already mentioned it. Verse 16 says, “And the dead in Christ will rise first.” So the order of resurrection is that the bodies of the dead saints will be resurrected first. Here it is talking about their physical bodies. Their souls and spirits are already with the Lord. Their bodies are going to be resurrected.

I heard a true story about the Civil War when the soldiers would be out sleeping in the open fields and the snow would come at night and cover them while they slept. You could just see the mounds of their bodies. It looked like a graveyard. In the morning, the trumpet would be blown and one by one the soldiers would arise. What a picture they said that was of the resurrection morning.

I never drive by a cemetery where I wouldn’t say, “Hang tight. You’re going to be resurrected. You’re going to hear the voice of an archangel, the trumpet of God, a command from heaven, and ‘the dead in Christ will rise first.’” It’s so important to understand that they’re with the Lord, but their bodies will be resurrected. How marvelous that is.

In Romans 8:23, Paul speaks about “the redemption of our body.” You’ve heard me mention that salvation has three tenses: past, present and future. The third phase is the resurrection of your body, the glorification of your body. Our bodies have not yet been redeemed. They are degenerating quickly. “Though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.”

Then in 1 Corinthians 15:53-55, Paul says, "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality....Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory....O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'" Whenever I do a funeral service for someone who has died in Christ, this is music to my ears.

You talk about hope! You talk about being able to live your life without fear! This is hope beyond the grave.

Then the third category of the plan is rapture, verse 17. "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up." It's the Greek word "harpodzo." That word literally means "to snatch up" or "to take up by force."

Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 15:52, that it will happen "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." As fast as you can blink your eye or snap your fingers, you'll be changed. You'll be metamorphosized. You'll be glorified. And your body will be redeemed.

The fourth category of the rapture is the reunion, verse 17. It's the phrase "together with them." The "them" in this phrase is your loved ones: your mother, your father, your brothers, your sisters, your aunts, your uncles, your friends—all who died trusting in Jesus. You're going to be with them. You'll be "together with them"—a reunion.

The rapture has so many other doctrines that are lined together with it. Now you are separated from them, but then you will be "together with them." There's going to be a meeting in the air.

"In the sweet, sweet by and by.

And all the saints will gather over there.

In their home beyond the sky.

And the music we hear will be glorious to declare."

We'll see Jesus and we'll see our loved ones. We'll embrace each other, be reunited. So don't sorrow as others who have no hope. Jesus died, Jesus rose, Jesus is coming again. This is the blessed hope of the believer: "together with them," with our loved ones who have died in Christ.

Then in verse 17, we will meet "them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." This is not the Second Coming. In the Second Coming, Revelation 19, we'll be coming back with the Lord to earth. In the rapture, we will leave earth and meet Him in the air. Then we'll be taken right back to the Father's house. So the rapture of the church is a different event than the Second Coming. Then notice in verse 17, "And thus we shall always be with the Lord." We will be face to face with Jesus.

The last category of the rapture is in verse 18: the profit of the rapture. So we have the problem of the rapture, the pillars of the rapture, the participants of the rapture, the plan of the rapture and the profit of the rapture. There are three things about the profit of the rapture: it comforts us, it cleanses us and it compels us. Verse 18 says, "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

My heart is comforted by these words. "...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." First, it comforts us to see our loved ones again. There is hope beyond the grave.

Secondly, it cleanses us. In 1 John 3:3, it says, "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He..."—that is, "Christ"—"...is pure." The rapture is a purifying hope. He may come today. He may come while I'm preaching. Every time I preach on the rapture I pray we'll get raptured while I'm preaching on the rapture. That's powerful preaching. Don't be left behind. If the rapture happened now, would you still be sitting in the pew? If not, get right with God.

Thirdly, it compels us. In 1 Corinthians 15:58, where at the end of the section on the rapture Paul says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

So let's get to work; Jesus is coming soon.