

Rom. 14:19  
So then let  
us follow  
after things  
which make  
for peace,  
and things  
whereby  
we may  
edify one  
another.



John 8:32 And  
ye shall know  
the truth and  
the truth shall  
make you free.

November  
19  
2017

## “NOT DEAD, BUT SLEEPING”

by Kyle Pope

While Jesus was upon the earth the gospel of Matthew records a powerful statement He made just prior to raising a young girl from the dead. Her father came to Jesus declaring, *“My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live”* (Matt. 9:18, NKJV). As Jesus went to the house where the little girl’s body lay there was a crowd of people mourning for her. The text tells us, *“He said to them, ‘Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.’ And they ridiculed Him”* (Matt. 9:24). A profound doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ is articulated with these words. Jesus teaches us that death is not the end—it is merely *sleep*.

This truth runs throughout Scripture, but it is especially clear in Paul’s first letter to the church in Thessalonica. Near the end of the epistle Paul writes, *“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”* (1 Thess. 4:13). Like the crowd mourning the little girl, death brings sorrow to the family and friends of those who pass away. But like Jesus, Paul says those who die are not gone—they have simply *“fallen asleep.”* Is Paul speaking metaphorically? Is he talking about sleep in some spiritual sense? No. The next verse connects it with Jesus’ death and resurrection. He writes, *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus”* (1 Thess. 4:14). Paul says the physical death and bodily resurrection of Jesus served as evidence that informs us about our own nature. The fact that He lived again after death foreshadows the promise that when He returns He will *“bring with Him”* those described as those who *“sleep in Jesus.”*

Again, Paul isn’t talking about some spiritual *“sleep.”* This is contrasted with those who are physically alive. Paul continues, *“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”* (1 Thess. 4:15). Those who *“are asleep”* are not those who are physically *“alive and remain”*—those who *“sleep in Jesus”* have died physically. Will they miss out on the blessings of the Lord’s return? No. When Jesus returns the dead will return also. But, in what sense will Christ bring them *“with Him”* when He returns? Paul continues, *“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”* (1 Thess. 4:16). The *“dead in Christ”* are those who *“sleep in Jesus.”* How will He bring them *“with Him”* when He comes? They will *“rise first.”* Is Paul talking about some type of spiritual resurrection? No. Nothing about Jesus’ physical death and bodily resurrection relate to a spiritual resurrection or simply the revival of a cause. Paul, like Jesus, tells the saints in Thessalonica that their brothers and sisters in Christ who have died are *“not dead”* (in one sense) *“but sleeping.”*

The dead will not miss out. They are not gone. Their life is not extinguished. Paul continues, *“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”* (1 Thess. 4:17). Those in Christ can look forward to a grand reunion with those who have passed away in Christ. The living, together with the *“dead in Christ”* who have risen will be *“caught up together”* to meet the Lord. The Bible doesn’t ever teach a concept of “The Rapture” (as the world teaches it), but at the Lord’s return His people with the resurrected saints will be *“caught up”* with *“them in the air.”* This is not describing events before some imagined earthly kingdom. It is not describing our fellowship with one another in the church. When this happens God’s people are promised a time when *“we shall always be with the Lord.”* In this life we can separate ourselves from fellowship with God at any time we choose to reject Him. That will not be the case in the

age to come. Paul ends by urging them to *“comfort one another with these words”* (1 Thess. 4:18). What a comfort it is to know that though life may pass from our body we need not fear. When it happens we will not be *“dead, but sleeping.”*

In the next chapter, however, Paul uses the figure of sleep in a different way. After comforting the saints with a lesson on the Lord’s return and our own hope of resurrection he addresses the question of timing. When will all of this happen? He writes, *“For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night”* (1 Thess. 5:2). Jesus used this wording in His discourse with His disciples on the Mount of Olives. After talking to them about the destruction of Jerusalem and His final coming, He warned, *“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come”* (Matt. 24:42). He then compares it to a thief coming in the night (Matt. 24:43), concluding, *“So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him”* (Matt. 24:44). Paul cites the Lord’s very teaching in his words to those in Thessalonica. When will this happen? We don’t know—it’s like the coming of a *“thief in the night.”* Paul continues, *“For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape”* (1 Thess. 5:3). If we live our life imagining that all is *“peace and safety”* but never consider our accountability before God we are not following the Lord’s charge to *“watch”* and *“be ready.”* Paul urges Christians not to make that mistake. Christians must be *“sons of the light”* and *“sons of the day”*—not living *“in darkness”* lest this day overtake us *“as a thief”* (1 Thess. 5:4-5). What are we doing if we don’t heed that advice? What is our condition if we are not ready? Paul writes, *“Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober”* (1 Thess. 5:6). In what sense does Paul say in this verse that some *“sleep”*? Is he talking about physical death? No. This is a charge *not* to sleep. The sleep of death is not a matter of choice. Paul is talking about those who are living, but who are unwilling to *“watch and be sober.”* They are not living their lives prepared to stand before God. In their blind unwillingness to be ready for the Lord’s return, they (in a different sense) are *“not dead, but sleeping.”*

What is your condition today? Perhaps you have avoided thinking about your own mortality not knowing what lies beyond this life. Jesus offers the only source of true comfort and assurance after death. To die in Christ is not a fearful thing. John wrote, *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them’”* (Rev. 14:13). If you are obedient to the gospel you need not fear. If death comes before the Lord’s return you can take comfort in the promise, you

will not be *“dead, but sleeping.”* On the other hand, if you avoid preparing yourself for the Day of Judgment through fear or indifference, you may tell yourself you are truly living while stumbling through life with your eyes closed to its inevitable realities. In such a case you are *“not dead, but sleeping”* through the moments of life that the Lord has given you to prepare for His return. If so, we urge you *“Wake up, O sleeper”* don’t linger in the spiritual death of separation from God — *“rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you”* (Eph. 5:14).

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## Remembering Randy Harshbarger

It is hard sometimes to let go of the past. We often continue to experience remorse because of something we did or did not do. Regret can rob the present of much needed time and energy that could be devoted in a constructive way to building for the Lord. We see unhappiness in the lives and faces of others, and we know that at least in part, we are the cause of such feelings. Sometimes when we think about the past, we want to get even with those who hurt us. We blame others for what they did or did not do. Maybe we are refusing to forgive someone for what they did to us.

All of these thoughts and ideas are involved in the process of remembering. The ability to remember is a precious gift. With this ability we recall many good times that were spent in the company of loved ones. We can reflect on the past with a view to doing better in the future. The children of God learned a much needed lesson about remembering. In fact, they were told to build a memorial as a reminder of what God had done for them.

*“Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath Jehovah helped us”* (1 Samuel 7:12). The Philistines defeated the Israelites and took the ark of Jehovah back to their own land for twenty years. It was only after the people of God forsook their idols and destroyed the high places, that God delivered them from the oppression of the Philistines. Israel acknowledged her sin and then offered animal sacrifices to the Lord. Then and only then did the Lord deliver them. A stone was set up in the place of deliverance to remind Israel that their salvation had come from the Lord.

It should be noted that Israel had to renounce everything that stood in opposition to God. Idolatry is anything that stands between us and the Lord. Idols in the heart, unless forsaken, always spell spiritual defeat. The Lord says put away your sin!



Renounce it right now! Confession of sin is also a needed element in the forgiveness process. David finally acknowledged his sin with Bathsheba by saying:

***“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned...” (Psalms 51:4).***

Part of repenting is the resolve to do better in the future. Israel determined to serve only the God of Heaven. This simply says that we must **want** to do better in the future. It is true that we have to do this, but we should also want to do better before the Lord. Prayer can help in this regard. Israel continued to pray unto the Lord for His help. As we escape the clutches of sin, let us constantly pray for strength and guidance.

The Lord promises to help us live a better life. By following after idols, the children of Israel were defeating God's purposes for them as His chosen people. They were the people of God! As such, they had to engage their enemies in battle. They could win the contest, but only with the Lord's help. We cannot sit idly by, for in doing so, we help Satan accomplish his purposes.

Israel was to remember the stone named Ebenezer, as a reminder of the Lord's help. We are to remember the ***“stone which the builders rejected.”*** It is only by the power of the sacrifice of Christ that we can let go of the past and press on to the future in joyful service and eager anticipation of a home in heaven. Lord help us never to forget that!

***via Power Talk; Lexington, Kentucky; Taken from the Market Street Messenger***

## **Don't Confuse the Two, II**

Last week we observed the differences between being arrogant and having self-respect or dignity. Today we want to look at two other concepts which may on the surface seem very similar and they are being strong-willed and being self-willed. They are NOT the same thing!

The Lord needs strong willed people. In the book of **Ezekiel** he promised ***“As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead” (3:9).*** Read the whole context in verses **5-9**. God promised to make Ezekiel just as hardheaded as they were going to be, but in service to Him. Other examples of this would be Elijah the Prophet, John the Baptist and the Apostle Peter. Strong-willed folks are not going to be turned away from accomplishing their purpose. They are going to be tenacious in pursuing any goal they deem worthy of their time and effort. But here is the difference maker for today's article: The goal may not even be their idea! Think of the offensive lineman on a football team. That is one of the most under appreciated positions on the team but he gives his all to move the ball down the field though he doesn't even get to call the plays, the quarterback or the coach does! For the Christian God calls the plays.

The self-willed person though, has to be doing only what HE wants to do, when HE wants to do it. It doesn't

matter that someone else came up with a better idea, if it's not HIS idea he won't give his effort. Diotrephes in **Third John 9** was a man like this. He had to be running the show even if it put him into direct conflict with an inspired Apostle!

Don't let yourself be this way! You CAN overcome it!

**Cleveland Reddinger**

## ***The Beauties of Heaven, a Place Everyone Desires***

***It is a place of reward for those who live as they should and suffer for it.***

**Matt. 5:3** *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

**Matt. 5:12** *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.*

**2 Cor. 5:1** *For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. 2 For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven:*

*It is an inheritance for those who find salvation in the Lord and serve Him faithfully,*

**1 Pet. 1:3** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*

***It offers the perfection of peace and joy we strive for on earth but are unable to achieve.***

**Rev. 21:3** *And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: 4 and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.*

A couple of hymns we sing remind us of the value of this eternal reward.

“When We All Get to Heaven” speaks of the “day of rejoicing that will be.”

“No Tears in Heaven” tells us the sufferings attendant with our mortality here will all end on that day.

“Heaven Will Surely Be Worth it All” demonstrates the favorable comparison of this great reward to the price paid while here through suffering.

**Jim Stauffer**

**Psa. 1:1** *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

## **HOURS OF WORSHIP**

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

**Visitors welcome**

**We conduct in home Bible Studies**

**We offer Correspondence Courses**

**Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer**

**Elders: Ron Peck and Jim Stauffer**

**Deacons: Bill Miller**

**Brandon Jimison**

**Casey Dent**

**Joe Hurd**

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### **NEWS AND NOTES:**

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NEWMAN, JOANN MEYER, STEVE  
WIMP AND LINDIA JACKSON

BIBLE CLASSES  
SUNDAY MORNING = EPHESIANS,  
PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS  
BILL MILLER - TEACHER

WEDNESDAY EVENING  
ISLAM VS. CHRISTIANITY  
JIM STAUFFER - TEACHER

SUNDAY SERMON: HEAVEN OR  
YOUR CHURCH?



## **What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

**Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

**Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30

**Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

**Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

**Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10