

## Season 6, Episode 6: Real Hope (4:13-18)

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**Felicity:** This season is sponsored by Crossway and one of their most well known titles is Gentle And Lowly by Dane Ortlund. In this book, we're given Jesus and his heart. Ortlund takes us deep into the compassionate, loving, gentle person of Christ and helps us fall in love with Him all over again. I love the way in which this book cause me to want to know Jesus better and to see him more as more than just my faith. It's one that's worth reading slowly and devotionally and definitely want to be talking about with others. Grab a copy wherever you get your book.

**Sarah:** Welcome to Two Sisters and a cup of tea. My name is Sarah, I live in the UK. This is my sister Felicity. She lives in the US. Today, we are getting stuck into the second half of chapter four of first Thessalonians goes to verses 13, down to 18 to a small but punchy passage today. Felicity, what's in your cup?

**Felicity:** Classic Yorkshire Gray today. For those of you might not have come across that mixture between Yorkshire tea and Earl Grey can't go any better, really. I've just come back from watching my son play football in the freezing cold and in true American fashion. I had an apple cider donut. And when I say cider, I don't mean alcoholic, I mean apple flavored. That's a cultural difference. But they are good apple kind of time. What about you? What's? What you said?

**Sarah:** Well, it's the season for hot lemon and honey in my house. That's what I've got in my cup. But I have got a short bread ring to go with it.

**Felicity:** Scottish. Nice. Classic.

**Sarah:** Well, it came in when there's like little packs of two. One for now, one for later.

**Felicity:** Always makes you think they're special when they come in their own little packet, doesn't it? I mean, it's good marketing.

**Sarah:** Yeah, I know. Not so great for the environment, though. Anyway, we have got a wonderful question from one of our listeners. We love it when people get in touch with questions, and this is a really helpful and pertinent question to today's passage. Let me read it for us. Most of my family don't seem to follow Jesus. I therefore find it hard to look forward to the return of Christ, as the Bible is clear. What will happen to them on that day if things remain as they are? How can I rejoice, as I should in Christ's return?

**Felicity:** Such a brilliant question and one which I think you and I can both say, really. We've felt this, we've thought about this, we've prayed about this huge amount. It's really real, isn't it? I think that's the thing. The more we read the Bible, the more we know that Christ's return is real and true and certain. And that really does make us feel very concerned for our loved ones who don't seem to know Jesus. And I think that the danger is that it would make us want this not to be true about Christ return. So I think that's something that we need to be wary of, that our concern doesn't make us kind of question the word of God. But as we have those concerns, I think both you and I have been driven to prayer for sure, and I wonder whether that's where it's at. It's kind of holding what the Lord is saying as it's intended to be, as we see all throughout. First, thessalonians this is an encouragement to us as Christians. It's an encouragement, it's a joy that Jesus is coming back. That's not to diminish what the question is asking about, but in that light, then why not then be driven to pray more and more for those who we know and love? That they would be encouraged by this and delighted by Jesus and turning and trusting in the ways that we've seen in Thessalonias what do you reckon, Sarah?

**Sarah:** Yeah, all of that. Let your tears drive you to prayer. I think that would be our heart on that, wouldn't it? And I think in that, I think I can feel quite scatty in praying for friends and family in that. But actually, over the last few years, me and my husband have just set aside a regular time once a week where we devote that time to praying for family and friends. And that's been really helpful for knowing that that is just the time that I am going to be debated in prayer to them, for them equally. With that, I could have the temptation to change the

truth for our family. A really helpful Bible teacher once said that to me in a class. The thing we're most tempted to change is the truth about Jesus in return for family. And so, as you were saying, we need to guard our hearts on that and pray that the Lord would help us to trust him and his character and his purposes, as well as pray for our family and our friends.

**Felicity:** Read.

**Sarah:** Yes, but the tone of this week's passage is of encouragement, and so we're going to kind of go with that tone. I hope we come to this. So we're reading Chapter 413 through to 18 today. Let me read. 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. You 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 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 proceed. Those who've 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.

**Felicity:** Thank you, Sarah. So all throughout this season we've been talking about various Bible handling tools that help us to get into a passage such as this one. We were thinking and talking about linking Words as we were kind of prepping for this. Can you just help us understand that? What are we talking about when we say Linking Words?

**Sarah:** I think what Andrew Sachs said last week was so helpful, wasn't it? Just actually, the purpose of any of these tools is just to help us to slow down and to read a passage carefully. And that really is what the Linking Words Tool is doing. Because with the Linking Words Tool is kind of seeking to kind of point out the Linking words. What we learn in primary school or first or second grade is the joining words in a sentence. And that sounds like a really simple thing to do, doesn't it? To go through a passage and circle those. But as we circle those, as we kind of point them out, what we're doing and what the Linking Words do is they help to shine a light on the passage and help us to understand why something is being said. So a good rule of thumb with the Linking Word is to just ask why is it there? What's it there for? If you see it, therefore ask what it's there for? It helps you to see the flow of why something has been said. And in a passage like today, when we've got a kind of series of events, it's actually the Linking Words or linking phrases that really help us to kind of place the events in order. So we've got four in verse 14, we've got and so in that verse as well, we've got four in verse 16, we've got after that in verse 17, and then we've got therefore in verse 18. That therefore being the implication of all that we've heard before. Now this is what you need to do. So they're just helping us to kind of make sense again of what we're reading by reading it slowly and carefully. And they just help us shine a light on that, I think.

**Felicity:** Yeah, really helpful and especially in light of this passage. So I think when we hear what this is all about, being Jesus, a Return, it can be tempting. Just kind of like leave it there. Right? This is the passage in the Bible. It's actually one of the passages in the Bible that talks about it, isn't it? And so we're going to stop there and we're like, all right, okay. So this is informative, which is true, but the Linking Words really help us to see as you were saying, verse 18, therefore encourage one another with these words. And I think that as we get into the passage is probably where we want to start even, is actually remembering that this is a letter of encouragement and the reason it's here is to encourage before we then actually get into the content of what it is. I love that. Then back in verse 13 brothers and sisters, we don't want you to be uninformed. So yes, this is informative, but so that you do not grieve like the rest of hope, who have the rest of mankind, who have no hope. And that those bookends kind of sets up the whole passage, doesn't it? Paul is saying this so that the thessalonians might know their hope more and more and as they know their hope, so would they be encouraged and able to encourage one another? And I think that's a really good frame in which to talk about Jesus's return.

**Sarah:** Yeah, definitely. No, I think you're right there and yeah, you really want to frame it with the encouragement. But also I think it's right to acknowledge in that verse 13, he's saying so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind. That doesn't mean to say that

you're not going to grieve, that we're grieving with hope and that's a different kind of grief, isn't it? And I just think that's really important to kind of acknowledge that. And I just think all of us wherever with that listening to our conversation or you and me, whatever it is, we're all wrestling with the huge rupture that death is and that will be in so many different kinds of ways. It's hideous, it's awful, it's just heartbreaking. And yet we do have hope and so we can grieve in a different way, but we still do grieve. And I think that's just assured me.

**Felicity:** Reading that, that's so helpful and you're right, use of the word rupture is so right, isn't it, that death is an interruption and yet here we have the hope that we have. So let's get into it, verse 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. When he says fallen asleep, he's just talking about those who have died, hasn't he? I love that he takes us to Jesus and as we look at Jesus, we see that he died and he rose again. And so we can be certain of the hope that we have through that same resurrection as we are in Christ. So we know that life is given through Him on into eternity. And you and I were talking about you say these kind of things in the midst of the world, amongst our unbelieving friends and family and it just sounds a bit weird and crazy, doesn't it?

**Sarah:** Well, it is weird and crazy, isn't it? As we read on, it is totally bonkers what's being said that we're going to meet the Lord in the air, like clouds and all sorts. It is totally crazy. And so, as you say, that bit, Jesus died and rose again. That means that we see the rest through the lens of history, don't we? And so we're confident that we can trust this, however weird it feels. Just going to read it and say it out loud. This is what's going to happen.

**Felicity:** Yeah, so true. So come back to every time, every time you're thinking, really, we come back to Jesus and we look at his death and his resurrection. Okay, so let's walk. So we got this order.

**Sarah:** Yeah, no, just saying. But again in the verse 15, according to the Lord's word, again, brilliant. Trust the Lord's word. Trust the Lord's word over my word. Anyone else's? Word like the Lord's word in this? Basically, it's the assurance, isn't it, that he's trying to assure the thessalonians that those who've died without and coming back, yet they're okay. It's okay.

**Felicity:** I wonder whether, contextually, there's just something going on there, but maybe people have died and we know they're persecuted and so there is potentially people have died from amidst their church, family illness, persecution, whatever it may be, and so it's a real concern. Be assured they're they're okay on this order of events. It's kind of if we don't have that particular question, it feels a bit weird to be giving us the order of events, but I wonder the specifics of it are so helpful because it's concrete, it's real, this is the deal, this is what is happening.

**Sarah:** Yeah. And it's a sure thing, it's a done thing, isn't it? This is going to happen. And so therefore encourage one another with these words. And I guess we just want to really major on that, don't we? When do we most need this encouragement? What do you think? When do you most need this encouragement, Felicity?

**Felicity:** When I doubt that the Christian hope is the real hope. I'm thinking that there might be another way of doing life better. Sometimes feel like we're choosing the uphill struggle by choosing to be a Christian. So I think this really helps. I really enjoy, actually, that for the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the Arm, with the trumpet call of God. It's unmissable, isn't it? And I think often as a Christian, you can feel like, how is everyone missing this? This is the Lord of the universe. And why am I seemingly feeling a bit alone in following Jesus? And I love the way that when Jesus returns, it's going to be unmissable. Everyone will know. I find that very reassuring because that's actually the reality of what it is to be following Jesus. What about you? When does this encourage you?

**Sarah:** I think when I most need to hear it every day.

**Felicity:** Good point. Yes.

**Sarah:** I genuinely need to be reminded every day that this is what we're living for. This is it. Because even just going to a kids birthday party this afternoon where I think just I really struggle. The fact that our life choices are such that we're living for something different, we're living for this future, and so we're making different choices about a lot of things that,

yeah, people at school gate on doing that, and I need to be reminded that that is okay to do that. It's worth it. And the motivation is Jesus coming back again. I think I just need this encouragement every day. But like driving a bit more on that. What does it look like to encourage one another? Does it mean just reading out this passage, does it actually mean to encourage one another with this?

**Felicity:** Well, I think even just us being in the passage together and talking about it today, I'm already feeling encouraged in my heart that this is true and real, more so than before we started talking about it. So bringing it up, talking about it has got to be a part of it. Just coming back to the passage, part of the joy of this is not just that Jesus returns, but in verse 17, he says, caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. And the personal, relational nature of what is going on here, that as Jesus returns, it's not just a kind of abstract, objective thing. This is an event actually. This is a personal Jesus bringing us to Himself. But I need to hear that. So I think as I'm thinking about how I can encourage someone with this passage, I'll be thinking I want to delight someone with Jesus by telling them that Jesus Himself is going to return and he's going to gather you. He's going to gather me. We're going to be with Him forever. That is something to be excited about and encouraged and to desire. Because as we were saying in our listener question at the start, you can hear this and think, I wish it wasn't true. I don't want that to be the case for my unbelieving friends and family. But when I see Jesus Himself in it and his love for me and that I'm going to be with Him forever, that actually is that. I want that. I really want that, especially in the midst of our broken world and all that life is.

**Sarah:** And as you see that, and as you fix your eyes, therefore, on Him and on this future reality, therefore, you're encouraged to keep going, aren't you? You're encouraged to keep pressing on day by day, even when it's hard, because this is the truth, this is the reality, this is what's coming. And therefore encourage one another to keep going.

**Felicity:** Yeah, I think that's so true, isn't it? Because being sure that it's true means that we're willing to wait for it. And we're kind of expectantly waiting for it, like our eyes are fixing everything. I wasn't sure it was true. I'd stop waiting. And that's part of the problem of not talking about it very much, isn't it? Because it moves out of our vision and we forget, why am I keeping going? Because I'm not quite sure there's an end point. I'm not quite sure there's a hope. So I feel like even just having this passage in the Bible is just helpful for the literal keeping going, one step in front of another. As a Christian? Definitely.

**Sarah:** Can you pray for us? Can you pray for our heart? Pray for our listeners? Can you pray along that?

**Felicity:** Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for the truth of Jesus's return. Thank you that you make it so clear and that we can have such certainty and in that is such joy in knowing that we're going to be with Jesus forever. We pray that you'd encourage our hearts with this. Would you help us to see it ourselves and delight in it, but also encourage others in this. Please give us boldness to talk about it confidence, because we know as we look at Jesus that it is true. And we pray that you give us wisdom and what it looks like to live in the light of Jesus's return. And please, Lord, would you encourage our hearts with this for your glory. Amen.

**Sarah:** Speaking of encouragement, thank you so much to everyone who's taken the time to rate and review the podcast recently. It's so encouraging for us to hear how our conversations are landing with people. We love this one. I'm sorry. There were only initials attached to it, so they actually know the person's name. But they say these podcasts are 20 minutes of pure golden joy. It's refreshed my soul to listen to two people talk so enthusiastically about God. I've been able to take little snippets away from each conversation, which has helped me in the chaos of life to remember who God is and what he's done for me. Excellent. Listening in the car, doing dishes, lying in the bath, wherever you happen to find yourself, listen up and be uplifted and encouraged. It's such an encouragement to us and every rating and review really just help to encourage others to give us a click and try listening. So thank you to whoever wrote that review for us and we really appreciate you giving us a rating review, if you can.

**Felicity:** Yes, absolutely. Thank you so much. We're so appreciative. We enjoy it. We will enjoy being back next time as we keep going into first thessalonians chat.

**Sarah:** Yeah, I feel like we're only kind of part one of this big on Jesus's return bit of the book. So part two next week?

**Felicity:** Absolutely. All right, see you then. Bye bye.

**Sarah:** Bye.

**Felicity:** This episode was sponsored by Crossway. You.