

COMMANDED TO COMFORT

I dedicate this book to my wife, Ellyn Smithson Dano, who went home to be with the Lord May 20, 1967, and all others who have lost loved ones.

Ellyn was very instrumental in leading me to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and she constantly insisted that I personally make the Word of God the absolute criterion in my life.

So, to the family in Heaven, I dedicate this book hoping that any who have loved ones who have preceded them into the presence of the Lord, will be comforted by the comfort wherewith I have been comforted with.

Buddy Dano, Pastor

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THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

The loss of a loved one is probably one of the greatest pressures in life. Many well-meaning people will try to comfort you by saying, "Everything will be all right," but you will find that every thing will NOT be all right, because you will miss that loved one. So, when a severe pressure comes to you, like the loss of a loved one, you have to have something more than human viewpoint.

The word "funeral," to me, seems to be very final, very mournful, and fatal, and sounds absolutely hopeless in its expression. To me, **a home-going of a Christian is a VICTORY, not a defeat. It is a PROMOTION, not a demotion.** So I refer to the death of a believer as a "memorial service." A memorial service because it is a memorial service of what the Lord has provided for us in GRACE.

A memorial service is very similar to a communion service, in which we "remember" the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for us. **We remember that some time in the past we accepted Him as our personal Saviour and He gave us eternal life,** and when we take the communion, we remember Him until He comes again, what He will do for us in the future. So, the memorial service looks back to past GRACE and forward to future GRACE. So actually we who are alive on this earth **as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ live our lives in the sphere of His GRACE.**

So the memorial service is over the loss of a loved one. We remember them, and the relationship we had with them when they were with us on this Earth. **The memorial service reminds us that we will be with them again, just as we do when we remember the Lord Jesus Christ who is not here with us physically today, but will return for us, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.**

The memorial service not only looks back, but it also looks forward. Funerals al-

ways look backward to the person who is no longer with us, but never does a funeral have the confidence of ever seeing that person again. People tend to believe that they are "paying their last respects" to the departed loved one.

But the Bible, the Scriptures, declare something entirely different, **because God in GRACE, has taken the sting out of death, and as He arose, we also will arise.** Physical death is designed to remind us of many things. It reminds us that physical life lived to its fullest is just a short time compared to eternity. The Bible declares that "we will all come to a full age," not an OLD age, but "A FULL AGE," which means that **God controls not only our life, but our death.**

In His perfect time, He selects the time for us to go home to be with Him. It is His plan, His timing, and **not our plan or our timing.** So when we have a loved one depart from us into the presence of the Lord, **you will remember that God's plan and desire is much greater and more beneficial than ours.** We may desire our loved one to be with us, but God and His omniscience knows better, and He has decided to take them to be with Him.

Even though physical life is short, **the shortness of physical life has not caught God off-guard. He has provided something more enduring, and that is ETERNAL LIFE, which is given to every one at the point of accepting Christ as Saviour.** So when you think about it, time is the only time in which a believer can suffer, for when we are taken home to be with the Lord there is "no tears, no sorrow, no pain, no death." We can see how foolish to want to have a loved one remain with us amidst suffering, **when it is far better to be with the Lord.**

Death is also a reminder of the unique death of the Lord Jesus Christ. How He laid down His life for us, and gave us eternal life, which no one can take from us, and neither

can anything separate us from Him when we focus on the death of Christ. **Because of His uniqueness, we no longer have the sting of death, but we have victory. And home-going is a promotion and not a funeral dirge.** Death is also a reminder of CURSING TURNED TO BLESSING. It is the principle of Romans 8:28, "We know that all things work together for good to them who love the Lord and are the called according to His purpose." Cursing is turned to blessing because Jesus Christ became a curse for us, so that there is "no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." And cursing is turned to blessing, because we go from the presence of our loved ones into the presence of the "Beloved." **So, the death of the believer in Christ is going from GRACE to glory, or glory to glory..... AND WHO IS AFRAID TO GO HOME?**

This "home-going," this confidence of victory, this "absence from the body and face to face with the Lord," is not a new concept, and it is not a tradition, and it is not for only a few special Christians. **But it is for everyone who has ever accepted Jesus Christ as personal Saviour.** It is mentioned many times, both in the Old and the New Testament. One of the oldest books in the Bible, Job 19:25, 26, states this, "Though skin worms destroy my body, I KNOW I WILL SEE THE LORD FACE TO FACE." **Job had confidence, hope, that he would be absent from the body and face to face with the Lord. Job had this confidence because of His understanding of eternal life. He knew that he would see the Lord after the death of his physical body.**

Then in Psalm 116:15 David said, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of one of His saints." The word "precious" is the Hebrew word for most valuable, highly prized. **Here the Bible states that the death of a believer, a saint, who is separated unto God for all eternity as a result of having accepted Christ as Saviour, is highly prized, most valuable to the Lord.**

In the New Testament Paul, in Philip-pians 1:21, says, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "To die is gain," that can-

not be said of any tradition, or organization, or system, or system of systems. **It can ONLY be said of Christianity, which is an eternal relationship with God the Father through the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ for all eternity.** "To die is gain." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of one of His saints." "I know I will see the Lord face to face." **All of these are expressions are of the confidence we have from the Word of God as to what the Divine View-point is on the death of a Christian... SO WHO IS AFRAID TO GO HOME?**

On the loss of his son, Quentin, Theodore Roosevelt wrote the following, in the last book that he wrote, called "*The Great Adventure,*" which was published in November 1918, just as the victory of World War I was won. His "Forward" was signed and dated November 6, 1918, just five days before the Armistice. It was exactly two months before his "own final promotion." This book is startlingly appropriate as his last published volume. The first chapter, "*The Great Adventure,*" reads almost like a conscious "fare-well."

A few of its sentences are quoted here as a fitting "epitaph" to a noble-hearted author of them. "Only those who are fit to live, who do not fear to die: and none are fit to die who have shrunk from the joy of life and the duty of life. Both life and death are parts of the same "great adventure." "Never yet was worthy adventure worthily carried through by the man who puts his personal safety first. Never yet was a country worth dying for, unless its sons and daughters thought of life, not as something concerned only with the selfish advance of the individual, but as a link in the great chain of creation and causation, so that each person is seen in his true relations as an essential part of the whole, whose life must be made to the larger and continuing life of the whole."

"With all my heart I believe in the joy of living: but those who achieve it do not seek it as an end in itself, but as a seized and prized incident of hard work, well done and danger never wantonly courted, but never

shirked when duty demands that they be faced. Woe to those who invite a sterile death, a death not for them only, but for the face: the death which is insured by a life of sterile selfishness. But honor, highest honor, to those who fearlessly face death for a good cause: no life is so honorable or so fruitful, as such a death.

“Unless men are willing to fight and die for great ideals, including love of country, ideal will vanish, and the world will become one huge sty of materialism. And unless the

women of ideals bring forth the men who are ready thus to live and die, the world of the future will be filled by the spawn of the unfit.” “In America today all our people are summoned to serve and sacrifice. Pride is the portion only of those who know bitter sorrow, or the foreboding of bitter sorrow. But all of us who give service, and stand ready for sacrifices are the ‘torch bearers.’” “We run with the torches until we fall, content if we can then pass them to the hands of other runners.”

FACE TO FACE WITH THE LORD

The Lord said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And with death there is no exception to that promise. **God provided GRACE for us in living and in dying.** We "walk" through the valley of the shadow of death, because "the Lord is with us." **So that when we finally die, or are promoted, we are "absent from the body and face to face with the Lord."**

The following portion of Scripture, found in 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, gives us this confidence.

Verse 1, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Knowledge, as stated here, about the Word of God, and in particular about death, is very important. **The most important confidence in the world is knowledge of what the Word of God has to say about death.** So, in this passage before us, the expression, "We know," emphasizes the importance of knowing what the Word of God has to say.

"We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle." The word "tabernacle" is literally, "tent." Tent, which refers to our physical bodies. **This means that our physical bodies are temporal, not permanent,** and designed only for this Earth and not for eternity.

So, if our tent, our physical bodies, dissolve, and they will, God has provided something much better. For this passage says, "We have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." A building, a house, compared with a tent. **Showing the stability, the permanence of the structure which is of Divine design, which is also eternal in the heavens, not temporary on this Earth.** So the Scripture says at death our physical bodies dissolve because they're not designed to last forever. But God in GRACE has provided something more permanent and enduring than a tent, a building, a house eternal in the heavens.

Our physical bodies could never last or exist in eternity, they are only designed for time. **But our resurrection body is permanent and eternal, which can endure for all eternity.**

Verse 2, "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven."

The Bible is very clear and very honest. This verse states that in our physical bodies we do groan. There are ailments, there are pains, there are diseases, **but notice it is not just the desire to get rid of this body, or this disease, or this infirmity, but "to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven."**

There is the Divine desire. Most people want some one to alleviate the pain, cure the illness, etc. But the desire here in groaning is **the desire for the resurrection body, which will never have pain, sorrow, tears, or death.** This verse again emphasizes the major issue, that it is a house from heaven, and not to concentrate on just getting out of this physical body. But to be clothed upon with our resurrection body, which is our scriptural anticipation and joy. Groaning in the body, but no groaning in our building, in our house. **Suffering is for time only, in the physical body. WE WILL NOT SUFFER IN ETERNITY. The emphasis once again is on the permanent, eternal house, not the temporal, physical tent.**

Verse 3, "If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked."

"Being clothed" is the bestowing of God in GRACE of our resurrection body; not being found naked, without a body, no clothing for **the soul and the spirit, WHICH IS THE REAL YOU.** So our desire is not to be unclothed, but clothed upon with a resurrection body, which is included in the ultimate of our "so great salvation." **God's plan is**

absolutely perfect for death, as well as for life. He has prepared everything perfectly.

Verse 4, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

This verse repeats the fact that there is groaning in the body. It is only natural and truthful. But again, the burden we have in this groaning body is not to just get rid of pain, **but mortality swallowed up in life.** This is a true, vivid picture of Christian death. **We stop groaning and start glorying in our resurrection body.** Our souls are saved at the point of salvation. That is why we are called "soul winners." But our resurrection body, which is a part of our salvation, doesn't happen till after death. **You have to die, finish your testimony, before you can receive the ultimate in salvation. So death is a promotion, victory and entrance into the presence of the Lord, anticipating a resurrection body just like the Lord Jesus Christ has.**

Verse 5, "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

This verse states that the One who had made us, the Creator, has given us God the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation, which is our "earnest," literally, "down payment," on our resurrection body.

The Holy Spirit is our guarantee. The Holy Spirit places us in union with Christ as believers and the Holy Spirit bestows spiritual gifts so that we can function in the body of Christ, and the Holy Spirit guides and directs us into all Truth.

But He is also our down payment, our security, our seal, that when we die, we are face to face with the Lord, and await the resurrection body. The Father is the Planner, and His plan of salvation includes a resurrection body. The Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is also God, executed the plan at the cross. **When He died for our sins, He provided eternal life and the ultimate of**

eternal life is a resurrection body which will be capable of existing for all eternity.

God the Holy Spirit illuminates this plan for us in the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit that indwells us at the moment of salvation is also our down payment on eternal life, which includes "being absent from the body and face to face with the Lord," anticipating a resurrection body.

Now, the following verses, 6 and 7, tell us that there are believers on the face of the Earth, and as believers on this Earth, they are in temporary bodies, not in heaven, but physically present on this Earth. The Lord at this time is at the right hand of the Father in heaven. So there is a problem as to how we as believers on this Earth can live our lives while the Lord is absent, not in our sight.

In verse 8 we have another group of believers, who are not on the Earth, but have already gone to be with the Lord in heaven. So we actually have believers living on this earth, and we have loved ones who have gone on before us living in heaven. They live their lives unto the Lord and we here on Earth live our lives unto the Lord. **WHO HAS A BETTER WAY OF LIFE?**

Verse 6, "Therefore we are always confident knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord."

Notice the emphasis on this verse is the same as before. **CONFIDENCE COMES FROM KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORD OF GOD.** "We are always confident knowing." **Confidence comes from knowing the Word of God and without the knowledge of the Word of God, which is God's plan for you, there is no confidence.** That is why there are many false concepts about death, and life after death, which causes many unnecessary sorrows. What does this passage say we know? Well, it says, "While we are at home in this body, we are absent from the Lord." "At home in this body" means alive in the physical body living on this Earth.

So while we are in our tent we groan, and we are also absent from the Lord. He is in the third Heaven, and we are here on this

Earth. So, there is a dilemma, or an apparent dilemma. Absent from the Lord. Well, how do we live our lives under God's plan on this Earth in His absence? The very next verse tells us that God has provided a way for believers to live their lives in a physical body here on this Earth and still have a relationship with Him.

Verse 7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

A simple, understanding verse, but so all encompassing. **Since the Lord is absent from us, faith is the only means of perception, the only way of life for Christians on this Earth.** We cannot see Him with our physical eyes, but walking by faith, we see Him with our "soul eyes." The Scripture says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." The Scripture says, "The justified ones shall live by faith."

So, God has overcome the apparent dilemma by giving us promises to put our faith in, while we exist here on this Earth. And He has told us that "We should fear lest we fail in not claiming the promises of God."

Well, what about our loved ones? What about our friends and relatives who have gone on before us? How do they live their lives? They are not present with us. They are present with the Lord. How do they live? Well, they don't live by faith any more. **But they live by sight.**

Verse 8, "We are confident I say and willing rather to be absent from the body and face to face with the Lord." (Present)

You can see by comparing verses 6 and 7 with verse 8 that the **believers who have gone on before us, and are with the Lord, have the better part.** They are absent from the body, we are present with our bodies. **They are present with the Lord, and we are absent from the Lord. We live our lives by faith, and they live their life by sight. If it were possible, but it isn't, for our loved ones to sorrow, they would sorrow over us.** We groan, we walk by sight, they don't.

The important word here is the word you have translated "present" with the Lord. The word "present" is PROS in the Greek language, which means **face to face in an intimate relationship.**

And for the third time we have in this verse confidence. "We are confident and willing." **We have confidence because of knowledge of the Word of God in our souls.** And we have a willingness or desire that comes from that knowledge, and that is to be absent from the body and face to face with the Lord. **This is knowledge about God's complete plan for our lives, which enables us to have stability when we miss a loved one who is no longer with us.** We have knowledge from the Scripture that they have the better part. **We know of their perfect condition, and we know that when our testimony is over, we will also be absent from the body and face to face with the Lord, and we will be reunited with our loved ones in Christ. So, WHO IS AFRAID TO GO HOME?**

This isn't death, it's glory,
This isn't dark, it's light,
It isn't stumbling, groping, or even faith, it's sight.
This isn't grief of having my last tear wiped away,
It's sunrise and it's morning of my eternal day.
It isn't even praying,
It's speaking face to face,
It's listening and glimpsing the wonders of His GRACE.
For this is the end of pleading for strength to bear my pain,
Not even pain's dark memories will ever live again.
How did I bear this Earth life before I came up higher,
Before my soul was granted its every deep desire?
Before I knew this rapture of meeting face to face,
The One who sought me,
The One who saved me,
The One who kept me by His GRACE.

COMMANDED TO COMFORT

The first Scriptures that really were a source of encouragement to me when I first became a Christian were the ones found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. As I continued to study the Word of God through the years, I found that these same Scriptures were designed to comfort believers who have lost loved ones. Each time you study this section of Scripture, you always find some new source of comfort for those who miss loved ones, who have gone on to be with the Lord. The command to comfort one another is found in verse 18:

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. WHEREFORE COMFORT ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE WORDS.”

The next event in God's plan is the “rapture of the Church,” and there is NOTHING that has to happen before it occurs. It can be at any time. It is the next event in God's plan. Not only is it the removal of the Church from the Earth, and the body of Christ be coming the bride of Christ, but in this section of the Bible the comfort is grounded in the fact that almost every doctrine in the Word of God is mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. We will list some of them.

Verse 13, “But I would not have you to be ignorant brethren.”

PRINCIPLE #1.

One of the keys to Christianity is knowledge, and it is knowledge of the Word of God. Here Paul is saying that he doesn't want the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to be ignorant of the Word of God, since **the Word of God is the only source of comfort for the believer.** So, ignorance is solved by simply studying the Word of God, because “Man cannot live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” If you are ignorant of the Scriptures, then you can only come up with human viewpoint. **But human viewpoint CANNOT comfort in a time of stress.** So knowledge of the Word of God is vitally important to the believer in Christ so he can “Grow in GRACE by the knowledge of our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Verse 13, “That ye sorrow not.”

PRINCIPLE #2.

The second principle is that you need not sorrow over the death of a loved one because the knowledge that we have from the Word states that **the home-going of a departed believer is GAIN, is PRECIOUS, and that the believer is “Absent from the body and face to face with the Lord.”** And that the body remains, but the **soul and the spirit are in the presence of the Lord in an intimate relationship, where there is “no sorrow, no tears, no pain, no death” because God has wiped away all tears.** We do sorrow, and we do miss our loved ones. **The Word of God stabilizes the believer in a time of great stress, and the living go on living.**

Verse 13, "Even as others."

PRINCIPLE #3.

"Others," here, means "others of a different kind." The "different kind" are those who have not accepted Christ as personal Saviour. We do not sorrow as the unbelievers, **because we have eternal life, and the unbeliever does not have eternal life, but is separated from God for all eternity.** "We know that nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The Bible makes a distinction over the death of a believer as contrasted to the death of an unbeliever. One is eternal life and the other is eternal torment. **So, the home-going of a believer is the triumph of GRACE, and a wonderful time to present the Gospel to the living.**

Verse 13, "Which have no hope."

PRINCIPLE #4.

The unbeliever who has rejected Christ as Saviour has NO HOPE. "Hope" in the New Testament always refers to confidence about the future. **Unbelievers have no confidence about the future, because they have no future with Christ. But the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ does have hope.** The believer does have a future, and we share the destiny of Christ. And we will receive a resurrection body, just exactly like the Lord's. The Lord Himself is our "blessed purifying Hope."

So we have hope, confidence, which the unbeliever CANNOT have. **Our hope and confidence are in the Lord, and not in ourselves, but in Him and what He has accomplished for us, which is all included in eternal life.** "Others have no hope," but we do.

Verse 14, "For if we believed that Jesus died and rose again."

PRINCIPLE #5.

This is the Gospel. The Gospel is clearly declared here, the death, burial and resurrec-

tion of the Lord Jesus Christ. **If you believe the Gospel of Christ, you have eternal life, and you are a child of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. This decision that you make to accept Him as your Saviour qualifies you for heaven.** It is "not of blood, (parents) nor the will of man, (church organization) but of God," John 1:13.

Salvation is a FREE GIFT OF GRACE, which guarantees eternal life, and includes the home-going of a departed believer. The only thing that qualifies you for going home to be with the Lord at death is, "BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THOU SHALL BE SAVED." The Gospel takes us from no hope, to hope.

Verse 14, "Even so also them which sleep in Jesus."

PRINCIPLE #6.

"In Jesus" is a position, which means to be in union with Him, and this is accomplished at the point of salvation. It is not an experience. **It is permanent and cannot be changed by any sin or failure.** It is our position in Him as a result of accepting Him. And we know that "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." And we know that "We are found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." So, "in Him" is an expression of our eternal position in Him. We are still in His family, even while we are asleep, which is actually Christian death. "Sleep in Jesus" is the connotation of awakening, expectation of awakening, the expectation of the resurrection body.

Verse 14, "Will God bring with Him."

PRINCIPLE #7.

Here is a clear indication that Jesus Christ is God. **Jesus Christ will return and gather us personally to Himself, and here the returning One is called God.**

John 10:30, "I and My Father are one."
1 John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 14:1, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." John 14:9, "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"
These passages all declare that Jesus Christ is God.

This same Jesus Christ, this same God, will return for us, and will bring with Him our departed loved ones. There will be a reunion with the departed saints. **We have not paid our "last respects," because we, like them, have accepted Christ as our Saviour, and when He returns, He will reunite the Christians in heaven with the Christians on the earth.**

Verse 15, "This say we unto you by the Word of the Lord."

PRINCIPLE #8.

Here is our authority. It is the highest authority, the Word of God. This whole method of comfort is based on the Scriptures. All the Scriptures are "God-breathed," and "the Word of God is alive and powerful." **The Word is that which causes comfort, confidence and assurance.** David expressed this principle in Psalm 119:76 when he said, "My comfort is based on Thy Word." And in verses 49 and 50 of the same Psalm he stated, "Remember the Word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in affliction, for Thy Word hath quickened me." So our criterion is not a tradition, or a church doctrine, "but the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever." This is the Divine Viewpoint of life and death.

Verse 15, "We which are alive and remain."

PRINCIPLE #9.

We all have heard the expression that we all must die and pay taxes. Taxes, yes, but death no. This passage says that not all of the believers will die. **If we are alive at the coming of the Lord, we will NOT experience death.** We will "all be changed in the twinkling of an eye." There are many ways in which a believer goes to be with the Lord. Some through serious illnesses, some through warfare, crime, natural disasters, and some just fall asleep and wake up in the presence of the Lord. But, there is a time coming when there will be believers on this earth who will not experience death. "We which are alive and remain." Death takes a holiday.

Verse 15, "Shall not precede them which are asleep."

PRINCIPLE #10.

This principle states that God is no respecter of persons. Any one who has accepted Christ as Saviour is IN CHRIST, and we are all one in Christ Jesus. "There is neither male nor female, Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free." **Our union with Christ, our oneness with Him, removes all distinctions which no political or religious organization can ever accomplish.** God is no respecter of persons, and the ones who remain and are alive will not go before those who are already in His presence. **God is fair.**

Verse 15, "Unto the coming of the Lord."

PRINCIPLE #11.

The coming of the Lord, the Lord Himself personally comes for us, to gather all believers to Himself. This is regardless of geographical location or SPIRITUAL CONDITION. We all will be delivered because we accepted Him as our Saviour and He knows those who are His. **The coming of the Lord for us emphasizes His attitude toward us, His concern for us, His care for us. He**

doesn't send some messenger for us, but comes for us HIMSELF, personally. We have a PERSONAL SAVIOUR. CHRISTIANITY IS A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THE FATHER THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND NOT A RELIGION OF MAN'S WORKS.

Verse 16, "The Lord returns with a shout and the dead in Christ rise first."

PRINCIPLE #12.

This principle states that the omnipotence of the Lord returns with a shout, literally, a "word to incite by." His shout, His Word, will incite us and gather the dead in Christ first. **The Word is powerful.** By His Word He created the universe, spoke it into being. **By His Word He will destroy Satan, and with His Word we are incited and caught up to be with Him.** The shout, is the Word of victory. **The shout is an expression of the ultimate triumph of GRACE.** It proves He is able.

Verse 16, "The dead in Christ."

PRINCIPLE #13.

The "dead in Christ" is here compared with verse 14, "them which sleep in Jesus." "Christ" emphasizes His Deity, and "Jesus" emphasizes His humanity.

So in this rapture of the Church, in this reunion with our loved ones, **we find emphasized the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God and He is perfect man,** which means He is the only "Mediator between God and man." **He is equal with God the Father and He is equal with man, therefore, He is qualified to be our Saviour. Jesus Christ is the God-man.**

Verse 17, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them."

PRINCIPLE #14.

This principle says, that "with them" is the fact that **we will be united with our loved ones who have gone on before us. And when we see them again, there will never be any more sorrow, pain, death, tears.** This will truly be a gracious reunion of all the believers of the Church Age, past and present. We will be come the bride of Christ. So we will see them again. We never pay our last respects if they precede us. **We are all qualified by believing in Christ.** What a home-going!!! What a reunion!!! WHO IS AFRAID TO GO HOME?

Verse 17, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

PRINCIPLE #15.

Here is the principle of eternal security, "ever be with the Lord." **This means we cannot lose our salvation because it is eternal in nature. And nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.** The security of the believer is depended upon the Saviour of the believer. **And we have eternal life, because He is eternal life. "I give unto them eternal life and no one shall pluck them out of My hand." "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish." We have eternal salvation, NOT TEMPORARY PROBATION.**

Verse 18, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

PRINCIPLE #16.

Here is the command to comfort. "One another" is one another of the same kind, meaning believers comforting believers. The context of this comfort is the rapture of the Church, the future of the believer, our home-going, our reunion with our departed loved ones.

The only comfort you can have over the departure of a loved one is only found in the Lord. There are, because of Him, five sources of comfort to all believers.

God the Father is the source of all comfort as stated in 2 Corinthians 1:3, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort."

God the Son is the source of all comfort as stated in 1 John 2:1, 2, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

God the Holy Spirit is the source of all comfort stated in John 14:16, "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."

The Word of God is the source of all comfort stated in Romans 15:1-6, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the

Scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And the rapture of the Church and re-union with departed loved ones is the other source of comfort as stated in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

So, if you have accepted Christ as your personal Saviour, you have five sources of Divine comfort available to you when a loved one departs to be with the Lord. You also have the above listed principles found in this section of the Word of God to put your confidence in. You have no sorrow. You have the Blessed Hope. You may not experience death. The Lord will personally return for you. God is no respecter of persons. His shout, Word, will incite you. You will be gathered up to be with the Lord and your loved ones forever. He has given you His Word, which He has magnified above His Name, and His Word is forever sealed in heaven.

Therefore, be comforted by these words. WHO IS AFRAID TO GO HOME?

Buddy Dano, Pastor

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CHRISTIAN'S CONFIDENCE

upon a loved one's home-going

"...the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God,"

2 Corinthians 1:4

I'll meet her in the glory,
I'll talk with her again.
I'll walk with her in Heaven,
Free from sorrow, care, and pain.

She is not dead! She liveth,
Not here, but over there
Where Jesus liveth also,
Who all her sin did bear.

I cannot bring her back here
However I might try,
But I can plan to meet her
In His presence, by and by.

My robes are washed as hers were
In the precious, crimson flow.
My future's safe, as hers is,
In the Saviour's care, I know.

You ask me, "Aren't you grieving?"
No! My heart knows God's own peace,
For like her, I have a Saviour
Whose blessings never cease,

And the blessing that is greatest
Is that death means gain, not loss,
To the soul that's seen the value
Of His death upon the Cross,

And all life takes on new meaning
Which e'en death can never dim,
So with hope and joy abundant
I walk ever on with Him!

Cornelius Vanderbreggen, Jr.