

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Death will come for us all.

Whether you are rich or poor, righteous or wicked—death will come for us all.

Yet in the second half of 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul says two things that give us pause: first, that he does not want us to be uninformed (v.13a), and secondly, that those who have passed away are merely asleep (v.13b). Instead of there being a finality to death, Paul's usage of the term "asleep" tells us that death is only a sort of temporary slumber. He uses the term "asleep" three times in our passage of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, reminding us that death is no longer the eternal separation that it used to be. This is because of Christ Jesus—He who died and went through the utter separation of death, so that death for us has now become a door to a better place. He went through the full horror of death, so that we need only go through a *shadow* of death, and not the real thing itself.

The truth is that death is an intruder. It came into this world, but was never supposed to be here in the first place. We must grapple with its reality while we are in this temporal state, but now we can respond differently. We have the freedom to express our emotions: we can weep as our Savior did (John 11:35). We can be angry because we know this shouldn't have happened. And as we lean into our sorrow and grief, let us be a community that is willing to surround each other when that happens. Let us be people who are willing to listen, to comfort using our presence. When the time comes, when we are ready, *then* we can point each other to the truth that we base our hope on: there will be a day when God will dwell with us, and we will be His people as He will be our God. (Rev. 21:3)

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

What is your perception of and relationship with death? Have you experienced grief over the death of a loved one? If yes, how did you respond during that period? If not, how did you respond to others around you who might have gone through the grieving process?

QUESTION TWO:

Paul talks briefly about the resurrection in this passage, and touches on the subject in different parts of his letters as well. Go through 1 Corinthians 15, and discuss what you have learned, as well as any questions you might have.

What is your perspective on the resurrection? How does having a fuller picture of the resurrection inform or change your thoughts on death?

QUESTION THREE:

We went through some suggestions that might be helpful on Sunday for anyone who is grieving, or who is walking with someone who is currently grieving. What are those suggestions, and how might you implement them in your walk with someone else?

How would you leave space for someone to process through their emotions, and, when they are ready, point them towards the hope that can be found in Christ? How might you take the opportunity to share the good news with someone who does not yet know Christ, and the comfort only He can give?