CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
MARCH212026

Scripture Story: Acts 18:18-28; 1 and 2 Thessalonians.
Commentary: The *Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 25, 26.

hope against hope



Photo by Sara-May Colón

flashlight

"Paul had necessarily adapted his manner of teaching to the condition of the church. 'I, brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual,' he afterward explained to them, 'but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.' 1 Corinthians 3:1, 2. Many of the Corinthian believers had been slow to learn the lessons that he was endeavoring to teach them. . . . However wise they might be in worldly knowledge, they were but babes in the knowledge of Christ" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 271).

keytext

"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."

(1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17, NIV)

what do you think?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

____ I don't think about Jesus' coming very often—it's too far away.

____ I don't think that Jesus' second coming affects my life right now.

____ Knowing that Jesus will come again and let me live for eternity makes me take things in life more seriously.

____ I believe that when I die, it is not the end for me, and that when Jesus returns I will be reunited with the people I love who believed in Jesus.

did you know?

The watchful Christian is a working Christian, seeking zealously to do all in his power for the advancement of the gospel. As love for his Redeemer increases, so also does love for his fellow men. He has severe trials, as had his Master; but he does not allow affliction to sour his temper or destroy his peace of mind. He knows that trial, if well borne, will refine and purify him, and bring him into closer fellowship with Christ. Those who are partakers of Christ's sufferings will also be partakers of His consolation and at last sharers of His glory" (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 261).

INTO THE STORY

"As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

"Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

"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, who 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 precede those who have 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."

(1 Thessalonians 4, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What is the reason for Paul's letter?

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_____

What things does Paul encourage the Thessalonians to do in their spiritual growth?

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Why do you think that Paul's explanation of what will happen at the Second Coming was so important to these people?

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How would it have affected their lives on a personal level to have this information? How would they see things differently?

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How might this knowledge have changed how they felt and encouraged them? How might it change and encourage you?

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If you had no hope of a resurrection in Jesus, how would it change your outlook on life?

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punch lines

"And I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man" **(Acts 24:15, 16, NIV).**

"For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?" **(Romans 8:24, NIV).**

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" **(Hebrews 11:1, NIV).**

"There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off" **(Proverbs 23:18, NIV).**

"Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold" **(2 Corinthians 3:12, NIV).**

further insight

"There are in the world today many who close their eyes to the evidences that Christ has given to warn men of His coming. They seek to quiet all apprehension, while at the same time the signs of the end are rapidly fulfilling, and the world is hastening to the time when the Son of man shall be revealed in the clouds of heaven."

—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 260

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Acts 24:15, 16.

Sometimes we hear about Jesus' second coming so often that we stop feeling how important it is. But think about it today. What if Jesus weren't coming? What if death were the end? What if we would never see our loved ones again, and after they were gone, we had to say goodbye forever? What if your eventual death would be the absolute end of you, and your life on earth had no meaning beyond the few years you spent here? What a depressing thought! When you really think about it, Jesus coming again and raising us back to life is good news! How do you think that Jesus' coming again affects you today?

Sunday

Read Romans 8:24.

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody" (1 Thessalonians 4:11, 12, NIV).

Think about Paul's advice to the Thessalonians. How can you lead a life that will win the respect of the people around you? Is there a difference between winning people's respect and being popular?

Monday

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

First Thessalonians 4:16-18 tells how Jesus will come and raise the dead. Paul advises us to encourage each other with this knowledge. How can we encourage others with the knowledge that there is something more than life on earth? Is there a way to tell others about this without seeming like a street preacher? What can you do in your own personal life that will show others that there is more to life than just the here and now?

Tuesday

Read Proverbs 23:18.

Ellen White explains how Paul had to adapt his preaching to reach people at different levels of their spiritual development. The Corinthians were baby Christians, and they needed a different approach than mature Christians would need. Paul said they still needed milk. That didn't mean that they were of less value or lower in status. We don't believe that babies matter less than we do; in fact, we give them more care and attention because they are so vulnerable! Do you take your friends' level of spiritual interest into account when you talk to them about your life with God? Would you consider yourself a mature Christian yet? What can you do to grow in your spiritual experience?

Wednesday

The verses in the *Punch Lines* talk about hope and what hope does for us in our lives. What hope do you have because of your belief in Jesus? How has that hope for forgiveness, heaven, and eternal life changed your life? How is your life different than someone else's life who might live without the hope you have? Hope gives us the courage to step out and try more than we ever thought we could! What do you think God wants you to try today?

Thursday

Read 2 Corinthians 3:12.

We can see from Paul's way of approaching the Thessalonians and the Corinthians that he was willing to adjust himself to meet the needs of the people. While God wants us to be true to who He created us to be, and while He does not want us to compromise our beliefs or ethics, He does want us to be flexible in the service of others. Everyone has different needs. Some people could just use a smile. Others could use an honest, friendly conversation. Others might need something as elemental as a warm meal or a secondhand coat. Try to see others as an opportunity for service. What needs can you meet?

Friday

Read Hebrews 11:1.

Life is not just about the 70-odd years we might spend on this planet. It isn't about getting as much money as possible, or about experiencing as much as possible. While God certainly wants us to live our lives to the fullest, we aren't supposed to do that at the expense of others. After studying this week, do you feel differently about the fact that Jesus is going to come again to raise the dead and bring us to live with Him? Do you see life any differently? What responsibility do you feel toward others in their spiritual experience?

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 25, 26.

* Unlikely Leaders is a special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles* created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.