

# Working and Waiting for Christ 1

## Thessalonians 4:9-5:2

by J.R. Miller

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life of love, cultivating a quiet life, minding our own business, and comforting others in sorrow, as taught by Christ and exemplified in the resurrection of Jesus.*

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 4:9

**Topics:** "Hope in Grief", "Living in Love"

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### Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of living a life of love and responsibility as believers await Christ's return, addressing the misconceptions held by the Thessalonian church regarding idleness and the second coming. He highlights that true preparation for Christ involves loving one another and leading a quiet, industrious life, rather than being preoccupied with others' affairs. Miller encourages Christians to mind their own business, work diligently, and maintain a good reputation in the eyes of the world, as their conduct reflects Christ. He also reassures believers about the hope of resurrection and the comfort found in God's promises during times of grief. Ultimately, he calls Christians to be true comforters, uplifting others with the strength of God's Word in their sorrow.

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### Transcript

It was probably during the early part of his mission at Corinth, that Paul wrote the epistle from which this passage is taken. The church at Thessalonica had been in existence almost a year. Erroneous views, especially about Christ's second coming, had spread among its members. Many of them had given up their daily employments, claiming that it was unnecessary to work, and that the richer members should support them while they idly awaited the Lord's return. To correct these errors and to exhort the people to a life of order, self-control and industry, Paul wrote this epistle.

The best way to prepare for Christ's coming--is to live a life of love. "Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other," Paul wrote. This seems to us a very commonplace lesson, for during nineteen hundred years the world has been hearing it. But at the time these words were written, it was a new teaching. Christ brought love into the world. Of course there was love before--love of parent for child, love of brother for sister, love of friend for friend. But Jesus taught a new lesson--that we should love all men--our neighbour as our self--and that his followers should love one another as brethren.

After the day of Pentecost there was a wonderful development of this new affection. The disciples had all things common. The rich aided the poor, the strong supported the weak, the joyful comforted the sorrowing, the victorious helped the defeated and fallen to rise again. Since that time, Christian love has been doing a marvelous work in this world. All hospitals, asylums, homes for the poor, for orphans, for the blind, and all manner of institutions for helping of the unfortunate, have sprung from this teaching of Christ. As it were, the heart of Jesus broke on Calvary--and its love poured out, streaming all over the earth, wherever the gospel was carried. We must be sure that we get this lesson well into our lives, and in our close, personal relations love one another as brethren.

"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life." This is a counsel against all blustering, all restlessness, all fussiness, and all passion for notoriety. Jesus himself, in his own life, gives us the best possible interpretation. It was said of him by the prophet, "He shall not strive, nor cry out; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets." We know how quietly he moved. He never sought notoriety. He did his work silently. The Christian should cultivate the same spirit. We are to put away all bitterness and all anger and evil speaking and all clamor--whatever is noisy; and are to put on meekness, peace, gentleness, patience, mercy, humility--the quiet graces. Perhaps we shall find it true at last--that the things we have sought to do with noise and advertising, have left but small results in men's lives, in the bettering of the world, while the unconscious influences of our lives have left everywhere deep and ineffaceable impressions.

"Mind your own business!" 1 Thessalonians 4:11. Some people have so much to do in looking after other people's affairs--that they have very little time left for their own! It is well for us to learn the lesson that our first responsibility is for our own life, our own conduct, the way we manage our own affairs. Every man must bear his own burden. We would better learn to keep our hands off other people's matters, unless in cases where they need our help, when it is a part of our duty to look not only upon our own things--but also upon the things of others. Love must always be ready to help, to share another's burden. But we must never be "meddlers in other men's matters."

On the other hand, we must 'mind our own business'. This means that we must not expect other people to do it for us. It is unmanly to wish to be helped through life, letting others bear the burdens for us. We must take up our own burden and carry it manfully. It means also that we must mind our own business, that is--put our whole heart into it and do it energetically, bravely. Some people who claim to be very pious and good--are too indolent to do anything, and their life proves to be a miserable failure. Have some business of your own--and put your heart into it.

"So that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody." The world is watching Christians all the time--to see how they live. They represent Christ in this world, and have Christ's honor in their keeping. All those who profess to be God's children, must take heed that they never dishonor the name of their Father. This covers far more than the worship and the behavior on Sundays or when engaged in religious services; it applies still more to the conduct of Christians during the week, in their business, in their social life, in their many contacts with the people of the world. They are always on duty as Christians, and must never do anything that will bring dishonor upon Christ's name.

"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope." Very much of the bitterness of the sorrow of Christians, is caused by ignorance concerning their beloved ones who have died. If we would give careful heed to the teachings of the New Testament concerning the death of believers and the blessedness into which they enter after death--our

sorrow would not be bitter. Of course, Christian faith does not deaden our hearts, does not make it easy for us to give up our friends, does not make the pang of separation slight; but the comfort which Christianity reveals, ought so to change the aspect of death as to bring a deep joy to our hearts, even in our greatest sorrow. When Jesus came to the home at Bethany in a time of bereavement, he comforted the sorrowing ones by revealing the immortal life. "Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." We should be Christians in our sorrow, as well as in our business.

"We believe that God will bring with Jesus--those who have fallen asleep in him." Jesus died and rose again. We are told that in his resurrection, he was the first fruits of those who asleep. Jesus was the first to rise from the grave--but his resurrection was the pledge that all who sleep in him--will rise too. One of the New Testament portraits of Jesus, shows him holding in his hand a bundle of keys--the keys of death and the grave. He has conquered death and dethroned the king of terrors, and is now himself the king of the realm of death. Our Christian loved ones who have fallen asleep--are safe in his keeping, sleeping in their chambers of peace, and in his own time he will call them forth.

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout!" The stupendous events described in these verses, we cannot explain; it is better we should not try to explain them. Humble faith would better accept them as true, and rejoice in the glorious assurances which they contain.

"Therefore comfort one another with these words." It is the mission of Christian people to be comforters of others in their sorrow. Yet too many Christians who go to their friends in the time of bereavement, are anything but comforters. They go with a certain kind of sympathy--but it is a weak, almost hopeless sympathy. They sit down by the sorrowing ones, listen to their story of grief, and talk with them about the sad phases of their sorrow, thus taking them down into the darkest shadows. Then they turn away with a few more sad words, and leave them in the depths of despair. Miserable comforters, indeed, are such people!

When we go to those who are in sorrow--we should rather carry to them the strong consolations of God's Word. We should not linger with them upon the sad phases of the experience through which they are passing--but should turn their thoughts to the promise of God, to the truth of immortality, and thus lift them up toward strength and rejoicing. The word "comfort" means to give strength; and we should always try to make our friends stronger, that they may be better able to carry their burden of sorrow. Trouble should never crush a Christian; on the other hand, the Christian should rejoice in God, and sing songs in the night.

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