

1 Thessalonians 5:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Analysis

Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him—tou apothanontos hyper hēmōn, hina eite grēgorōmen eite katheudōmen hama syn autō zēsōmen (τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν). Christ apothanontos hyper hēmōn (ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, 'died for us')—substitutionary atonement: Christ died in our place, bearing penalty we deserved. Hyper (ὑπέρ, 'for/on behalf of') indicates representation. This death accomplished salvation (v. 9), securing eternal life with Christ.

Whether we wake or sleep (eite grēgorōmen eite katheudōmen, εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν)—interpreters debate meaning. Either:

1. whether spiritually alert or careless (linking to v. 6's watchfulness), or
2. whether alive or dead when Christ returns (linking to 4:13-17's concern).

The second interpretation fits context better: Christ's death ensures believers (dead or alive at His return) will hama syn autō zēsōmen (ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν, 'together with him live'). Death doesn't separate believers from Christ; whether we die before His return or live until it, we'll be united with Him forever (4:17).

Historical Context

This verse addresses the Thessalonians' original concern (4:13): believers who died before Christ's return. Paul reassures: Christ's death guarantees that both

living and dead believers will 'live together with him.' This wasn't universalism (all saved regardless of faith) but particular redemption (those for whom Christ died will live with Him). The emphasis on 'together' (ἀμα) stresses reunion—death separates believers temporarily but Christ reunites us eternally. This hope sustained early Christians facing martyrdom: death couldn't ultimately separate them from Christ or fellow believers.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's substitutionary death ('died for us') ground your assurance of eternal life with Him?
2. What comfort does 'whether we wake or sleep' (alive or dead at His return) provide regarding death's uncertainty?
3. How does the promise to 'live together with him' shape your view of death, heaven, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

τοῦ	ἀποθανόντος	ὑπὲρ	ἡμῶν	ἵνα	εἴτε	γρηγορῶμεν	εἴτε
Who	died	for	us	that	or	we wake	or
G3588	G599	G5228	G2257	G2443	G1535	G1127	G1535
καθεύδωμεν	ἀμα	σὺν	αὐτῷ	ζήσωμεν			
sleep	together	with	him	we should live			
G2518	G260	G4862	G846	G2198			

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 3:18 (Parallel theme): For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

Ephesians 5:2 (Parallel theme): And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Romans 8:34 (Parallel theme): Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

2 Corinthians 5:15 (Parallel theme): And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (Parallel theme): For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 (Parallel theme): 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.
