

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words.

The LORD gives us the encouragement we need to overcome.

- 1. He fills our ears with his promises of joy and victory**
- 2. He puts encouragement on our lips to share with each other until he comes again.**

The sound of the gjallarhorn is heard often at the home games of the local NFL team. The loud horn is a sound that is recognizable to most Minnesotans. When it is heard, it is often associated with excitement and the fact that something good is going on. It often means that the game is starting, a first down has been gained, a touchdown has been scored, or the defense came up with a big play. It is a sound that brings excitement and encouragement to many people in this state and wherever Vikings fans are found. At the very least this sound promises that the afternoon or evening will be filled with the welcome distraction of football for a few hours, and when the team is doing well it is a sound associated with the promise of excitement and victory. Maybe you have been to a game where the sound is played, where the massive sound of this horn swells and those in attendance roar along, but even if you have only heard the sound played on television, we can all imagine how this sound adds to the atmosphere of excitement and lifts the spirits of those in attendance.

It might seem a bit silly that we are talking about a sound heard at a football game, when there are so many more important things to talk about today. After all, our lessons present us with the realities of death and heaven. And today many are have to face the reality of death head on. Many are still hurting and in mourning over the deadly attacks that took place in Paris just a few days ago. But whether you are pacing in sorrow and anxiety in Paris, or you are sitting on your couch in relative peace and comfort in Minnesota, the LORD gives all of his people this encouragement. One day, the LORD himself will come down, with a loud command, with the trumpet call of God, and at the LORD's direction all the trouble of this world will be over and all his believers will be

rescued from all the evils of this world and we will be victorious and with the LORD forever.

On that day God will gather his people from all nations to himself and never again will the alarming sound of an ambulance be heard. Never again will the disconcerting sound of police sirens and gunfire fill the night anywhere, ever again. For on the Last Day our Lord will come again to bring his people to the peace and joy of eternal day. The great and final horn will sound and we will rise with excitement to the eternal victory in heaven that our Savior has won for us. The sound of a great horn, the trumpet call of God, will be heard and we will be with the LORD forever. We are encouraged by this promise of God. ***16 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. 17 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.***

Yes, the **LORD gives us the encouragement that we need to overcome** the troubles, the trials, the pains, and sorrows of this world. The LORD gives us the encouragement that we need so much, as **he fills our ears with promises of joy and victory.** And **the LORD gives us the encouragement that we need to overcome as he puts encouragement on our lips to share with each other until Jesus comes again.**

As familiar as Minnesotans are with that horn that plays at Vikings games God's ancient believers would have probably been more familiar with the sound of a trumpet call being associated victory and hope and joy. The sound of a trumpet blast was part of the soundtrack of Israel's history. At the battle of Jericho, for example, God had priests march before the Ark of the Covenant and blow trumpets of ram's horn. The sound of the trumpet called a shofar, sounds pretty similar to that gjallarhorn heard at Viking's home game. The sound of the shofar, the sound of the ram's horn, this ancient trumpet was a sound of victory, a symbol of the LORD's promise and presence.

Consider the sound of those horns sounding when God's people marched around the walls of Jericho. For seven days the people of Israel were to march around the city of Jericho and the priests were to blow the shofar. On the first day of the journey God's people may have very well been filled with excitement. The sound of the horn blasting; the promise of victory so clearly before them. But imagine how things might have been on days 3 or 4. Maybe a bit of doubt, or frustration, or anxiety, or impatience started to seep into the minds of these people. Their feet tired from the march and their spirits sagging from human doubt. How could this bring victory? How could this walk bring down those walls?

But there was the encouragement of victory that kept them going. The LORD had made a promise. That final horn would blow and victory would be theirs. No doubt when their arms grew wearing from carrying the ark, when their feet got tired from marching around the city, when their spirits lagged because of doubt or fear that this just wouldn't work, the encouragement was given. "Just a few more days" Just a few more days until the final trumpet and the day of victory would be upon them. And then the seventh day

came, the sixth trip around the city was completed and seventh trip around the city started, and this time when the priests sounded the *trumpet blast*, *Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!"*

Consider the sound of such a trumpet blast, the shout of God's people in victory, as the promises of God's help and power and victory are fulfilled. What a thrilling scene that must have been!

Now consider the challenges of the Christian today in the light of the promises of God. Our LORD has made a promise of victory that encourages and sustains us. As Christians we walk with our Lord in faith through the trials and pains of life, we trudge through the frustrations and the troubles. We might even face the ominous obstacles of suffering and death and loss that tower over us like fortified walls. The trials of life, the tragedies, the pain, the death that surround can suck the life right out of us; leaving us only with a heavy emptiness. Our bodies tired from the stress of the journey, our spirits sagging because of human doubt and the fear of our enemies. We might be tempted to wonder if our walk of faith does any good at all, and yet our spirits are lifted when our ears are filled with the sound of our LORD's promises. Through his Holy Word He fills our ears with the promises of joy and victory. He speaks of eternal victory through Jesus. Jesus died and rose again and we too will rise to eternal life. Even if we die we only sleep for we know that we will awake to eternal life. Blessed are those who die in the LORD for their souls will be taken to heaven and their bodies will rest in the dust of the earth until our Savior comes again and raises them to glory.

God's word gives us the encouragement that we need so that we can continue on and overcome the challenges and trials of this life. And while we might not hear trumpets blasting in the background, we have God's Word and his precious promises to daily resound and resonate in our ears. God gives us words of living hope and soaring encouragement so that we may overcome even the most difficult challenges.

As we sit at the hospital bed of our own child; as we stand at the grave of a parent, friend, or a loved one; as we page through the latest of world tragedies and that heavy feeling of emptiness churns about in our guts, the word of God trumpets into our ears and lightens our load. Our ears are filled with everlasting encouragement. The emptiness of sorrow and the terrible void of pain and the darkness of anger are all chased away by the powerful promises of God. And that emptiness inside of us that we feel in these moments of despair, that emptiness is slowly filled with the light of hope and joy and victory that only our LORD God can provide. The word of God is there to be read, to be proclaimed, the message of hope is sounded, and the gospel swells for the encouragement of God's people. You can almost hear Paul's voice swell with encouragement and hope and love as he triumphantly proclaims the essential truths of the eternal gospel. ***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.*** And we know and find comfort and confidence in the fact that these are more than just Paul's word, but God himself gives us these words of promise. ***According the LORD's own word....*** God himself fills us up with his Spirit working through his Word and Sacrament. Jesus told us, "I am

the resurrection and life.” He tells us that he will come back. He tells us that he will take us to be with him in heaven. God himself promises that he will lead us through this life until the day that we meet our Savior face to face. God will be there for his people and one day he will dwell among his people for all time. ***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. ¹⁷ 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.***

When the trumpet sounds God will gather all his people from all the nations to himself and we will be with the LORD forever. Hope and joy and victory fill the empty void that sin, death, and this sinful world all work together to produce in us. Hope and joy and victory graciously fill the void that we often seek to fill with temporary and often harmful solutions. Our LORD in his grace trumpets his words of promise so that our sagging spirits are lifted; his words of encouragement and victory and promise make our souls swell with certainty and excitement. The emptiness of sorrow and pain and anger is replaced with fullness of peace and joy that our Savior has promised to his people.

And as we walk through this life that is so often filled with difficulty and tragedy let us also remember that we walk together in the victory that Christ has won for us. As believers we are joined together in a bond that is stronger than fans crammed into a stadium. We are joined together in the bonds of faith that transcend geographical borders, team allegiances, and general likes and dislikes. We are united in faith. Believers from every nation, tribe, language and people united in Christ. Believers united in Christ from different cultures and nations and walks of life and together we walk through this life, side by side, shoulder to shoulder as Christian soldiers, as the people of God marching on to the victory that we have in Jesus.

And so along the way we can encourage each other. “Just a few more days until that final horn.” We might say. Whether it sixty or seventy or eighty more years, or more - in the grand scheme of things it is always just a few more days. Jesus will come again or Jesus will take us home soon. We might not know the day or the hour; we might not know when he is coming again, but we know for sure that he will come again. And whether we are here to welcome him or whether we die in faith, we know that we have victory and peace in him. And nothing in this life, no terrors, or sorrows, or pains, not even death itself can overpower us or even truly frighten us, because we who believe in Jesus will be with the LORD forever. Dear friends, encourage each other with these words. ***¹⁴ 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.*** Be filled with hope and joy and the anticipation of eternal victory as we wait for that last trumpet to sound in all its glory. Brothers and sisters in Christ, find encouragement for each day in this truth: the trumpet call of God will sound for victory in Christ is coming! Amen.