

LIVING IN LIGHT OF HIS COMING

Live in Hope (part 2)

Notes Week 5 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

III. Live Alert (this week's message is a continuation of the outline for week 4)

A. **Review.** Paul begins addressing End Times doctrine in 1 Thessalonians 4, and yet the undercurrent of the entire letter is the anticipation of Christ' return for His church. Week 4 we talked about the *parousia* or appearing of Christ in the clouds. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The church was confused about their loved ones who had died. Their questions reflected the culture around them which believed death was the end of existence. Paul however, assured them that those who have already died when Christ returns will not be at any disadvantage, in fact they will come with the Lord. Their dead bodies will be risen and Christians who are alive will be caught up with them. We will all be changed—whether alive when Christ returns or having already died. (See 1 Corinthians 15: 50-58). There is order to these events, yet to us it will happen in the “twinkling of an eye” and these events will seem simultaneous. Likewise, Jesus assures the disciples of His coming and He comforts them with His words (John 14:1-3)

B. A Different Perspective

Chapter 4 Explains the second coming in reference to two groups of people—Christians who are alive and Christians who have already died. Chapter 5 however *contrasts two groups of people*—Christians who are alive when Christ returns, and non-Christians who are alive when Christ returns. Paul is explaining the negative side of the coming of Christ.

General information.

1. The Day of The Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 uses a common term, “The Day of the Lord” (I will abbreviate it as TDOTL). The phrase is used 19 times in the Old Testament and 5 times in the New Testament. In a general sense, TDOTL is a time when God personally intervenes in history, usually having a strong emphasis on judgement. In the Old Testament, the phrase must be interpreted in the context of the passage of Scripture. In the New Testament, the phrase is always used in reference to judgement of those who have rejected Christ AFTER the church has been raptured. **The coming of Christ ushers in the Day of the Lord.** These two events are different events, but they will seem simultaneous. For the church, Christ' coming is release and rapture to be with Christ. For the unbeliever, it is the beginning of judgement. Two events, two different objectives, affecting two groups of people differently. Don't be confused by this. God is perfectly capable of both judging and guarding at the same time. Exodus 8, 10, 11 tell of God judging Egypt by sending plagues for refusing to let Israel go, but at the same time guarding Israel from the plagues.

No matter where you put the rapture of the church in the timeline of end times events, the Day of The Lord will follow.

2. The Day of the Lord will usher in **The Tribulation.**

Tribulation is a word used throughout Scripture. In a general sense, it means a pressing or crushing from outside circumstances (as opposed to an inner conflict) Jesus tells His disciples in John 16:33, “*in this world you have (already have) tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*” All of us will experience tribulation to some degree in this life. BUT general tribulation is different from The Tribulation. The Old Testament book of Daniel along with the New Testament book of Revelation, indicates that in the end times there will be 7 years of intense worldwide tribulation. This 7-year block of time is divided into two sections. The latter section is sometimes referred to as The Great Tribulation. *Wonderful Christians disagree over the interpretation of events within these 7 years. It is OK!*

While it is not my desire to confuse anyone, I want to make some general statements. 1. I do not believe we are in The Tribulation now. We may be going through tribulation, but we are not in THE Tribulation. 2. The church is not destined for wrath. We may experience persecution and suffering, but we will not experience the wrath of God. 3. Study for yourselves to get more answers, but at the end of the day, trust the Lord. He is our good and wise God, sovereign in all things. The church is His bride, and He will not pour out His wrath on her.

Certainly, Paul is writing to clarify end times events, but the overall spirit of the letter lets us know that these events have bearing on how we live our Christian lives today—as we wait for Christ to return. Knowing these events will take place changes the way we live.

Verse 1. Paul has already taught on the subject of end times. He does not need to repeat everything. He does however warn against setting dates and speculating about WHEN Christ will return.

Verse2. TDOTL will come like a thief in the night. While certainly the coming of a thief sounds ominous, the statement is directed at unbelievers. For the believer in Christ, the rapture of the church will have already taken place in the twinkling of an eye, a split second before TDOTL is ushered in and judgement begins.

Verse3. Destruction will come suddenly upon the unbeliever and there will be no escape. Matthew 24:27-29, Jesus describes the time of Noah. Noah was told by God that destruction was coming and he obediently built the ark in preparation for it. He preached to the people who turned a deaf ear. They did not believe Noah and went about with normal life—ignoring what was coming. When the rain began to fall, and the ark was sealed with Noah’s family inside, destruction came to the unbelieving people with no escape. And so, it will be in the end times. The Christian will be saved but the unbeliever will experience destruction.

Verse 4. This verse begins with the word, **but**. Anytime you see this word (especially at the beginning of a verse) make a mental note that it is a transition word. The writer is about to present a contrast to previous information. “*But you (Christians) are not in (spiritual) darkness.*” Christians will not be overtaken by TDOTL, because they have been eagerly waiting for Jesus return. (Remember, Christ’ return and TDOTL are seemingly simultaneous event, separated only by the blink of an eye.)

Verse 5. The believer in Christ will not be overtaken because we are sons(children) of light and sons (children) of day. To be a son or child of someone is to have the nature of the parent. To be a child of light means we have the nature of light (Christ), the spiritual DNA of light. Paul is using metaphors (picture words and phrases) The metaphors of light and darkness are used throughout Scripture. (John 8:12, Matthew 5:14, Ephesians 5:8)

Verse 6&7. Since we are children of light, we live in contrast to those who are children of darkness (unbelievers) We are to live alert and sober/sober minded while we wait for Christ to return. The unbeliever is spiritually asleep and spiritually drunk. Verse 7 is not a verse about laziness or alcohol use. It is a metaphor depicting the unbeliever's state of mind and spiritual condition. They are unaware and uncaring, willfully rejecting truth.

Verse 8. This is again a contrast. While the unbeliever is asleep and drunk in their spiritual condition, the believer is to be sober and alert. An indication of alertness is that these Christians in Thessalonica had already put on a protective way of living. Again, Paul uses a picture word. He says they have put on the breastplate of faith and love. The breastplate of a Roman soldier covered the vital organs. It went from neck to thigh and covered the soldier both front and back. It protected the soldier from the enemy's weapons. As Christians, faith and love protect us. Faith is simply trusting God enough to obey Him. When we trust God and obey him in all things, we are protected from the schemes and fiery darts of the enemy (see Ephesians 6). When we walk in love, we are protected as well. This is agape love—a love of the will, appropriated through the Holy Spirit living in us.

Paul also says they have put on the helmet of the hope of salvation. The soldier's helmet covered the head and metaphorically that includes the mind. This blessed hope we have of Christ return protects our mind. It guards us from fear and careless living while we wait. It keeps us sober minded and alert while we wait for Christ to return.

Verse 9. Our hope of salvation points straight to the truth ---we are not destined for wrath rather we will be saved out of the destruction that is to come. We are not destined for God's wrath because His wrath was satisfied in the death of Christ. Romans 3:24-25 and 1 John 2;2 uses the word *propitiation*. It means satisfaction and refers to God's hatred and judgement of sin. Calvary is indeed a demonstration of God's great love for us. He allowed His perfect Son, Jesus Christ, to be the substitute for us. Jesus blood paid the price for sin. BUT the very same act of love is also a demonstration of God's great hatred and great judgement of sin. Redemption cost God greatly, but He was willing because He hates sin. His love for us and His hatred of sin are simultaneous. For the believer, God's wrath against sin was satisfied in the death of Christ. Believers will never experience God's wrath—it has been satisfied; the debt has been paid. Unbelievers, however, have rejected God's love and His way of escape, therefore they will experience God's judgement against sin.

Verse 10. Paul goes back to the euphemism he used in chapter 4. "whether we are awake or asleep..." He is speaking of Christians who are alive when Christ returns or Christians who have already died when Christ returns---either group of Christians will be with Christ. We do not have an appointment with wrath, but we do have a wonderful appointment with the Lord.

C. Encourage and Build Up (verse 11)

While verse 5:11 is similar to verse 4:18, there is an added element of “building up” it means to build up like building a house—laying a foundation, shoring up walls, putting on a roof. The phrase is speaking to us about helping each other become mature believers, strong in our faith. We need each other in that daily process.

As we build up one another, two words in the passage stand out: **alert and sober**.

Alert means aware, a mindfulness of threatening danger which with an earnest and alert mind keeps us from spiritual drowsiness and slacking in our faith and conduct.

Sober means fully awake, fully aware, not dulled by anything, to be sober minded, clear thinking that translates into mature living.

Be Aware of the condition of the world. 2 Timothy 3:1-5

Be Aware of Christ’ coming. Matthew 24:42-44

Be Aware that how we live each day matters. We have to participate in the Christian life, we cooperate with the Holy Spirit. We do what He says to do!

1 Peter 1:13-15—

- a. *gird you MIND for action*. What we think determines how we behave. Our minds must be transformed by the Word of God. That transformation will translate into obedient mature Christian living. BUT you and I must actually open God’s Word and read it, study it, apply it. We do this with the Holy Spirit working in us and through us. Philippians 2:13 says, “It is God at work in you both to will and to do His good pleasure.” God gives us the “want to’ but we cooperate, we say yes. When we say yes, the Holy Spirt enables us, empowers us, to live as God has commanded us to live.
- b. Keep sober in spirit. Keep your spiritual eyes open!
- c. Fix your hope completely on the grace that is coming at His appearing. Jesus is coming back—this is our great hope. We cannot put our ultimate hope in money, relationships, politics, circumstances. We fix our hope (Unwaveringly) on Christ.
- d. Live holy lives—consecrated to God, blameless, sacred.

Romans 13:11-14 and Ephesians 4:22-24 teach us to lay aside and put on. WE DO this by willfully turning away from the old way of thinking and living, and fully embracing our new life in Christ.

Encourage each other in this Christian life. Build up each other! Jesus is coming back and we must be ready, living each day as if it could be today.