

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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People Of The Kingdom

PART

9

TITLE

Alert At All Times

SCRIPTURE

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11



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Well, good morning people of the kingdom, glad you're here. It's a blessing to be with you today. This says, Frost. Is that a weather forecast or what? I don't know, what now. Brian is loving the sabbatical time, I'm sure and he was gracious enough to allow me to come and preach today. I like it, it's fun and I'm telling you what. It is a joy to be able to come week in and week out. Whenever we're in town, we're here. We may be in the 11 o'clock service at 9:30. We seldom make the 8:00, but we love being a part of this family and having Brian Frost is our Pastor. Appreciation just a moment for Brian.

What a joy it is. And one of the things that's happened during this time is, as Daniel said a while I go, with that gracious introduction, a lot of you have no idea who I am and have no reason to, because a lot of you are brand new. And so just out of curiosity, how many have come and Brian has been the only pastor you've known since you've been at Providence? Bunches of you here. Look at that. Cathy, I got to go. Yeah, those people I'm sure they were waving, but yeah. But isn't that great? Look it, did you see that? There was a ton of people around here. A lot of folks have come in since COVID for any number of different reasons, but they know they're going to get the word of God week in and week out in this place.

So that is our joy. And so Cathy and I love being a part of this family, and today we get to love the word of God together with you. And when Brian called and asked if I would preach, he said, "You preach whatever you want to, as long as it's in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. So I've looked at this passage and I'm going to preach on Mephibosheth from 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 five. No, I'm not really. But let's look at this together and have a blessed day, as we think through what Paul has been saying from chapter one through now, that this is a life that God has granted us in Christ Jesus, that is making it possible for us to live now in light of what's yet to come, and to enjoy now fully anticipating that this is not it, in the final analysis.

It's a prelude and it's a great prelude because we are in Christ in that, but there's so much more. So much more. And so let's listen together. As last week, you talked about the coming of the Lord. And this week, we talk about how we live in anticipation of that day. Beginning in verse one, chapter five. "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you." And we pause there. Every pastor should start a sermon like that. You have no need for this sermon, but ... And then Paul keeps right ongoing. So I'm going to keep right ongoing on what he says. Why is there no need for anything to be written?

He says, "You yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'There's peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they'll not escape, but you are not in darkness brothers for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light children of the day. We're not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, those who get drunk are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let's be sober. Having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake

or asleep, we might live with him. Therefore, encourage one another, build one another up just as you are doing.”

Let’s pray together. Father, that’s why we’ve come this morning to be built up in this most holy faith that has been birthed in us through the redemptive grace of Jesus Christ. Our sin has been forgiven. Our identity has been secured as children of the King. We are who you say we are. And Father, may we never miss the beautiful grace and mercy of that reality, that you have called us your own. And Lord, you’ve called us to prepare for your coming, to live in anticipation of that day, when we, as the Church, will be adored as a bride for her wedding day, when we will meet the Lamb of God, who is the Groom. Lord, may we find in this passage, great encouragement this morning. Great hope not just for us, but for those who are described in this passage as the sons of darkness, who need still to meet the Savior. So Lord, we bow humbly before you and ask that you open the word for us in Christ’s name. Amen.

Around Thursday afternoon, I was not sure whether we were going to get here or not, because some of you were bringing out the rowboats and the rafts and everything else, trying to figure out how you were going to get through all those rainstorms to get here. It didn’t catch us entirely by surprise, because the news stations and the weather people were saying, “It’s going to rain and it’s going to rain a lot.” But how many times have they said that, and it was drought in Raleigh? And so we hear it and we understand it. Yes, I’m sure it’s going to rain somewhere, but probably not on us. And so began the storm.

Alerted, warned, and then the next picture we get on the news, it’s that car. You know the one I’m talking about, that’s got water up to the windshield, and somehow or another, the warning they thought didn’t apply to them? Either they didn’t hear it or weren’t paying attention, but somehow or another, that warning missed them entirely and they thought, “It’s not going to be a problem for me. I can drive through anything. My name’s Noah and I got this. I got this. I’m going to make it work.” And so they just ignored that. Now why would people in our culture as smart as we are, ignore a warning like that? Maybe it’s because about every other day, we get somebody calling us on our cell phones warning us, that our car warranty has not really coming ... It’s lapsed and you’re in trouble. Or your password has been compromised by hobgoblins in wherever in the world.

So we hear these things and we’re going like, “Yeah, right.” Or we go ... I love my phone now. It says, Spam Risk. Isn’t that a great thing to have on your phone? Why couldn’t it be more exact and get everybody? But that’s what happens. We live in a culture that we don’t pay attention to the warnings around us, and we’re not alert to the things that have been told us are going to happen. And so what happens is, that we find our senses highly engaged and attuned to certain things. So when parents bring home that first newborn, the first night, parents do you remember that? And every hiccup, every sigh, one of the parents is jumping up out of bed, running in there and see if everything’s all right. They just are alert to any warning sign, “Maybe that’s it.

Maybe we should call the doctor.” Maybe you should go to bed. Let the child sleep through the night. Wake him up, “Are you okay?” Yeah, that’s good. Or we hear sirens. We’re not sure with that electronic sound anymore where it’s coming from, but we’re alert and we want to start looking around, and then the truth comes out. We really want to make the light regardless of where the siren’s coming from, but we hear it. We’re made alert to certain things and so we pay attention to some stuff, but God knows our nature. And he knows that we’re not inclined to pay attention to the most important things sometimes. And so he spends time through guys like Paul, making us aware that, what you’re experiencing now is a prelude to what’s coming.

So he says, “If you’re in Christ already, this is a promise. If you’re not in Christ yet, this is a warning and a call to be alert.” Here’s the reality. Jesus is coming again.

Are you ready for that? See, I grew up in a time where there was an old song called, People Get Ready, There’s A Train Coming. Well, there’s a Kingdom coming, brought him by the King of Glory. And his question for us and his warning to us and his alerting of us is, are you living in the knowledge that Christ is coming again? Scriptures give us all kinds of alerts, all kinds of news reports, all kinds of updates so that we can be aware of what that’s looking like. But the problem is, is that we’re not sure if it’s going to happen. It’s been 2000 years now. How long do you have to wait? Until the Father in heaven says, “My son, now.” Do you know when that’s going to be? I hope not. I hope you’re not one of those people. “Well, I think it’s going to be on August 13th, 2023.” Yeah, okay. The Bible says, “You’re not going to know.” We don’t know the day or the date. We know that the Bible says he’s coming again, and the warning for us is, “Live ready.”

The question that Paul is posing for us today is, “Are you living that way?” And so as we start to process this, it’s very important that we understand that when he says, “I have no need to write to you about this stuff.” He’s already spent four chapters explaining who we are in Christ and what a great heritage we have. And whether you’re already dead and in the grave or whether you’ve already met Christ and are going to meet him in the air when he comes again, it doesn’t really matter because you’re going to be alive together with him forever. So we who are still alive, we live with great anticipation of that day. We wake up every morning with the pulse a little faster thinking, “Is this going to be the day?”

When we were thinking about retirement many years ago, and now it’s been six and a half since we retired. But many years ago, we’re thinking about it. I always thought it’d be great to have a house elevated a little bit, with a front porch facing east. “It’s cloudy today Lord. You’re coming on the clouds. Do I hear trumpets this morning? No. Okay.” Going about the day, doing all that you’re going to do, but live in an anticipation of his coming, is what will help us direct our steps. Now he says, there’s two kind of folks that we’re going to be addressing. One is the sons of darkness and those who are in that world, he says, “It’s not going to be good when Jesus comes.” And we’ll explain that as we go through. But then there are sons of light and he gives this very practical instruction as to how we’re to live in light of that light.

So how do we understand life as sons of darkness? Why? Because we know that we used to be sons of darkness and we have either family members or coworkers or neighbors or whatever, who are still living as sons of darkness. And we're not quite sure how this news about Jesus coming again is playing into how we respond to them. And so God gives us a little clear insight into who they are. So as we understand these sons of darkness, we begin by seeing what Paul says here about these people, the ones in verse three, these people are saying, the sons of darkness that, "There's peace and there's security." In other words, don't worry. We got it under control. It's almost as if they're saying, "I'm in charge now. Believe me, come follow me. All you lemmings, let's go off the cliff together."

And there is that idea, that we're going to be able to figure this whole thing out, if we just follow the crowd. And he says, "No." But he says, here's what's going to happen, "Sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman and they'll not escape." That's frightening. These folks are not counting on the fact that Jesus is coming again, to be a reality that they're ever going to experience. There's a sense in which, even if they think that it might happen, that they're going to get in the exception clause somehow or another, or be graded on a curve and they're going to be able to squeeze through anyway. And he says, "No, there's no escape." They can't see the danger of their condition, and they're rushing full speed ahead toward destruction.

Now culturally, you know what I'm talking about, because voices from all around us are crying out, "No, here. Here." Political parties are saying, "This is the way. Walk in it." And excuse us if we don't go, no. I don't care which part you're part of, one aspect of your platform is going to lead us to destruction and I'm not going there. I'm going to find what God says about what our world should be like when Jesus is on the throne, and that's the way I need to go. And so the world around us is saying, "Do this." The worldview presented in the classrooms, the worldview presented in media, the worldview presented in the business. All kinds of places, we see it coming up with all these ideas and ideologies that are basically leading the sons of darkness deceptively to think that there is peace and security in that way and no other.

So he tells us here, he says, "Look, there's peace and security." No, there's not. The prophet says, "They will be saying, 'Peace, peace.'" And there's, there's no peace, but they're deceived in thinking that my way will bring it. Now you crazy Christians were told, you had this foolish idea, which we mock and speak derisively of. You have the idea that God actually has a say in what's going on here. And that somehow or another, if you believe this book, you're going to be able to escape the mess in the world around you. Naivety to the extreme. You're fools. As a matter of fact, if you espouse any of the doctrines in this book that we don't agree with, we're not only going to just say you're wrong. We're going to say that perpetrating those kinds of things in our culture is hate speech. Anybody heard that?

Yeah, it's hate speech to believe God in his word. And so the sons of darkness, they're deceived by claims of security and peace. If you do it our way, it'll all work out. And here's the problem, how's it working out? Murder at an all time high in our nation, because we're so enlightened. We're so brilliant. We got it. All the

world should look to us. We got all the answers. No. Why? Because the word of God has been dismissed. The anticipation of being held accountable by a coming King of Glory, who's the Savior and Sovereign Lord of all is going to require us to give an account for how we lived our lives, either according to the deceptive claims of our new ideologies or the age old truce of God's word. And so he says, "Don't be deceived by these folks."

"Here's what scares me," he says. He says, "There's a problem, even among you who are believers." And this is why Paul is writing this. He says, "There's a danger here that some of you, because Christ delay coming, is going to give you the wrong impression that maybe you got it wrong. You are living as if that's not going to happen, and you're beginning to be numb to the whole idea of living a life under the influence of the King. And you're beginning to think maybe some of the stuff that they're telling us is right." And so moral law gets compromised and all kinds of ideologies about who and what God is like, get changed, and we're wondering if maybe they're right.

Jeremiah 2 says, "You cannot afford to think that way." And he says in verse 11, "Has a nation changes it gods, even though they're not gods?" In other words, all the folks with the wrong ideologies, they're true to their school. They're not budging an inch. If you have a plan of beliefs that are taking you in the opposite direction from Scripture, you're not likely to shift on your own. Something's going to have to intervene. God's going to have to break through that. He says, "But has a nation, has a people, has anybody who has no gods, have they changed gods?" No, they're not changing. They're stubbornly committed to their idols in their wrong thinking, their false doctrine.

He says, "Has a nation changed?" No, they're not even gods, but they won't move. "But my people." Here's the scary part. He says, "My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled of heavens, at this. Be shocked. Be utterly desolate, declares the Lord, for my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters and have hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can't even hold water." And so the world has bypassed the plan of God and substituted its own, recognizing that God's plan is not even tried and failed. It's just not tried. And we can improve on that, which God says, by putting in his own place, our own systems of thinking and behaving. And he says, "No, they're broken cisterns. They can't even hold water." And my people are jumping on board with you guys.

So Paul says, "Look, this thinking of the sons of darkness is so far off base. Please be alert. Don't go there. Don't sell out what you have in Christ for the sake of being accepted by folks who are heading for destruction, because of the deceptions that they've embraced. Do not be deceived. Do not be deceived. God will not be mocked."

Secondly, he says, "Okay, you got the deceptive thing going on, but here's another piece of it." He says, "What happens is that, that philosophy of the world has brought in this sense in which you're drunk with the indulgence of your flesh that says, 'I can do things in secret and there will be no consequence. If I can just get away with it, it'll be fine.' Have you ever asked your kids, 'Why did you do that?' And what's their

collective universal answer? “I don’t know.” Yeah. And then you press harder and they get more definitive, “I don’t know. I don’t know.” But then finally, maybe there’ll be a moment of truth, when you suggest a possible answer.

When you know that you did something wrong and you’re going to face some punishment for it, why do you compound the punishment by lying about it? Why would you do that? And they’ll look at you like, “Are you crazy? I might get away with it. If I lie about it, you might believe the lie. I can get away with it. So I’m willing to take that risk.” And so the world around us is saying, “Look, if I can do things in secret, if I can do things in quiet, hiding in shadowy places, then nobody will hear.” So in verse seven, he says, “For those who sleep, they sleep at night. Those who get drunk, get drunk at night.” Why? Because the darkness is covering our sin. The indulging of our old nature needs the cover of darkness.

Now here’s a little scary part for us in the culture of which we’re apart right now, is that what used to be done in the darkness is now being paraded and celebrated in the light. It’s a changing world, but it’s not a changing gospel.

So what we have is to understand that God is saying to us, “Look, God can see. He does see and everything that you do, say or think is going to be broadcast from the rooftops one day, when Jesus comes again. The sons of darkness are not advocating for the return of Christ. Would you say that’s fair? Yeah, we don’t want that. Yeah, well you don’t have any choice. He is coming again and there will be an answering for those things. So yeah, there’s deception that comes that says, “Oh, everything’s going to be fine. Everything’s fine. If you just do it our way, it’ll be fine.” “There’s no evidence of that ever.” “Well, just trust us. Go our way.” Pardon me, but no.

The drunkenness that comes when our indulgence of our flesh happens and we start thinking, “Well, I’ve got my tracks covered and nobody can find this out.” No, no, no, no, no. Godly character is what you are when nobody’s looking. It doesn’t matter whether you’re doing it in the darkness or the bright mid-day of everybody watching. If you’re in Christ, everything is open.

You’re not having to hide anything. He says, “No, don’t indulge your flesh that way.” But what happens? He says, “There’s destruction coming for those who walk in darkness.” It’s coming, and that destruction is consistent consequentially with whatever you have done with your life. There will be a time when you are answering for that. Some will say, “Well, I don’t know that’s really fair of God to do that.” Oh yeah, we’re going to tell God what’s fair, aren’t we? We’re good about that. “God, that’s not fair.” “Oh, one of us is Sovereign, and I don’t think one of us is not. I think maybe I have a better idea about this than you do.”

So let’s talk about fairness and justice. You don’t want fair and just, when you look at the things in your life that are contrary to God. He says, what’s going to happen, destruction is going to come upon those who have not been forgiven through Christ. Well, what about those who don’t understand and don’t know?

God says, "They've got enough information that they're responsible." Where is that? Romans 1:18-20. He says, "The wrath of God." That doesn't sound healthy, does it, for you? If you're talking about the wrath of God, that brings consequence, destruction, condemnation, all things with it. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness because that which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes, his eternal power, his divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they're without excuse." Everybody has to answer. All of us, have to answer and give an account.

The sons of darkness are thinking, "Well, maybe God will grade on the curve here. Maybe I'll slip through." He says, "No, no. Everybody will answer one day for his or her own sin. And we have enough for the ages in each of our lives. We need forgiveness." "But you don't know me. You don't what I'm like." "Yeah. I actually do. I've read the book, and you're not unlike all the rest of us. Sinners by nature and sinners by conduct."

Here's how the son of darkness thinks about this thing. "You know what? I could agree with a lot of what you're saying, and one day I'm going to do something about that. I understand the gospel. I've heard. I've had 10 people explain to me how I could come to know Christ. And you know, I'm just not ready. One day, I'm going to do something about that." What's Paul saying here? What if that one day is one day too late? What if that one day that you're counting on having doesn't arrive? He said, "Well, I'm betting 2000 years on the fact that it's not going to hit in my time, and I'm going to wait till the last minute. I'm going to be one of those glorious deathbed confessions of Christ."

You're either braver or stupider than others. I'm not sure which it is, but don't do that. The destruction is coming. He said, "That's not the way it ought to be. Be ready for his coming, by making your heart open to Christ and letting him forgive you and give eternal life." So he says, "Understand what these folks are like, understand the sons of darkness." Because one, you can drift back into that way of thinking, if you're not careful and alert and sober-minded. You can drift back into that way of looking at the world. And if you look at the Body of Christ in our nation today, we've got enough Christians in Church houses all over the land today that we ought to be making more difference than we are.

Wouldn't you agree? I mean, we ought to have some way of ... But the problem is we meet together, we affirm things together, but we walk out the door and we're not anymore ready to live it out, than when we walked in. And the power of the Spirit and the power of the Gospel changing lives and the power of watching God transform a culture, is not happening because it's not happening in a lot of believers' lives, because they're not really sure that they have to live in anticipation of the second coming of Christ. He is going to come. Now the truth is we shouldn't have to have a threat of a second coming for us to walk with Christ.

We shouldn't have to have that. We should be able to just say, "Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so." Little ones that are belong yeah, you know the song. And so you say, "Lord, I'm going to do

what I'm supposed to do because I love you, and because of your great love for me. That's why I'm going to live a life pleasing to you." And that's why Paul is saying in this passage, "I don't need to write these things to you. You should already know that you live for Jesus, because Jesus is worth living for."

But he says, "If you need an extra little ... An extra little push, you do know he is coming again and you don't know when it's going to be. And it could be really, really, really embarrassing, if he comes and catches you at what you know you're doing regularly, but you hope and pray that he doesn't come right then." That attitude that you knew you should have forsaken a long time ago. That relationship that should have been forgiven and you haven't. All those things that are still back there, "Well, I'm just hoping he doesn't come when that happens." We don't know when he is going to happen. So, "Sons of darkness," he says, "Don't be like that believers. And if you are a son of darkness, come meet your Savior. Let your sin be atoned for, forgiven and let your new life be not characterized by darkness. But you are born of the one who is light, and out of his radiant splendor, he will transform you and make you ready for heaven and fit for earth, because Jesus is all you'll need."

So he says, the sons of darkness, we got to understand it. We will be sharing Christ with these people. We want to understand the way they think. So, how do we then become more aware of how we're to function as those who are the sons and the daughters of light? How do we embrace life as those who are of the light? Well, there's three specific applications that Paul makes in this passage to help us see that. And each one has ramifications in terms of how we, as believers, are going to function in a world that is characterized by darkness. How do we do that?

Starting off by saying, this alertness is an issue. He says, "You got to be alert to his coming. He is coming again, get ready for it. Be living every day in anticipation of it. Make sure that you are aware that you are thinking when you're going about your business of the day, about your priorities, about the frame of mind, about what you're needing to take care of and how you're going to take." How am I going to do this in such a way that when Jesus comes, he will be able to say, "Good job. Well done. And I came and found you in the middle of doing light instead of dark. I love that."

So first he says, "Be alert to his coming." That means that we've got to wake up to the light. And being able to wake up to the light, means that we have to be awakened by the Spirit. You can't wake yourself up. This is an alarm that only God can bring. He has to come and he has to work in us. And so he says in verse six, look, "Let's not sleep as others do." It's not a time to sleep. He says, "Let's be sober and alert." Let's get ready for his coming. Let's wake up and be alert in every way, to the fact that we are to wake up to the light of God's Glory, and only he can produce that kind of awakesness. Or dare we say only God's wokeness is true woke-ness. That's the only thing that really matters. When God wakes us up, that's being awakened by the Spirit of God, regenerated by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and produced this whole world.

Don't you love the news about this new web telescope that's out there and the pictures that were coming in? And they said, "Do you think there's something in all those galaxies out there?" That's the equivalent of a grain of sand on your fingertip at the end of your arm, and that's about how much of it you're seeing. And the believers just go, "Holy, holy, holy. It's the Lord God Almighty. Great and marvelous are your ways. You know the names, not only of those galaxies, you know every star in them and you know them by name." And we are here thinking, "I think I can fix this myself."

God's going like, "No, you can't. You need to be awakened to the reality of what I am and who I am, and the power that I alone have to awaken you to the reality of how to live for me, in such a way that this is the way God wants you to live." He wants to wake us up, and he does so by his mercy, as the radiance of his glory. Kisses our faces with the life-giving light of Christ, and he just brings light and life to us and we are made alive and awake through Christ. That's what the sons of light are about. We're alert to his coming.

Secondly, once we're awakened to this reality, we begin to watch more for the light. We began to be alert to the fact that he could come any time, any day. And we used to talk about this much more in the Church than we do these days. It kind of became passé to talk about the second coming of Christ. "Yeah, he's coming again, yeah. We believe he's coming again, sure we do." Well yeah, what does that mean? "Well, that's a doctrine that really is not relevant to my life. And so I don't live that." Paul says, it's very relevant to your life. You need to be looking for his coming. You need to be living every day, waking up and your heart beating stronger. Is it today Lord? Is it today?

I remember one time right, about a week before Cathy and I got married and I had not really been doing any particular study on the second coming, but coming into the Eastern clouds, coming in the sky and there will be the sound of trumpets. And we'll sing about that and hear that in music, and then, he will appear, and it will be bright as day and all this stuff. So we were apart that first week before the wedding, and I'm with a youth group at camp in August. Mosquitos the size of horses, heat so ... North Carolina heat is a unique heat. It's just oppressive. And so, there we are in this place and I am torn, trying to go to sleep. If I pull the sheet up over my head, I'm stifled by the heat. I can't breathe. If I move down, mosquitoes are going, "Smorgasbord, cabin three. Let's eat him up."

So I finally was able to doze off, and I can't remember if I was under the sheet or on top. I don't remember, but I do remember I was awakened by the sound of much thunder. And I sat up and it was like daylight outside. It was in the middle of the night. It was lightning and it was blowing and it was just, whoa. This is from a finally getting to a deep sleep. I wake up to this. My first thought is, "This is it. Jesus is coming again now." Second thought, "One week before my wedding?" Third thought, "I'm sorry Lord. You can come anytime you want. That's fine." But what a sweet thing for the Lord to have embedded in my consciousness as a follower of Christ, that it could be in the middle of any night.

We had other friends that were coming through the mountains, in the Rockies and everybody else in their bus was asleep. And they ran at the corner and he got so excited. He stopped the bus, jumped out on the side of the road on the shoulder, "Praise Jesus." It was a hot air balloon, but he thought this was it. All he saw was the brightness of the colors and the beauty and the radiant splendor. Wouldn't it be great to live every day anticipating, "Could this be the day? Could this be the day?" And that's what he says. He says, "Be alert. Don't be asleep like other people do. Be alert and sober."

Then thirdly, he says, "I want you to walk in that light. Make sure that you are aligning your life with his will. Since we belong to him and belong to the day." Verse eight, "We've got to be sober. We've got to put on the breastplate of faith and love. We're going to put on the helmet, which is the hope of salvation." One guarding our hearts. One guarding our minds and thinking, "Lord, I will align my will with yours every day, because I'm looking for Jesus this day. I'm looking, I want to be ready when he comes." That's what Paul's saying. So be alert to his coming.

The second thing he wants us to ... That's the first little application Paul gives us. Be alert. Think about it, make it a part of your prayer life. "Lord, is it today?" Will you say Maranatha? Come Lord Jesus, like the scriptures do? God's delayed. We don't know why, but we know it has because it hasn't happened yet. But one day at his discretion and his timing, when everything is ready, he's just going to go, "Jesus, go." And he will rise from his seat and come.

Just a little sidebar, this is not a part of the sermon, but I guess it is because I'm talking about it. When Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, it says, he went in there. He offered the sacrifice as the High Priest and the sacrifice he offered was his blood as the Lamb. And the Father received it and was satisfied, that our sin had been atoned for. And then what did Jesus do? He sat down. No high priest sits down in the Holy of Holies, except the High Priest.

And the next time he gets up, that's right. There will be clouds. There will be a trumpet. There will be radiance. And we will see him as he is.

On a white horse riding in the ... Well, that's a whole nother topic, but let's just say right now with the reality, that he wants us to be alert. And secondly, he wants us to be aware that he's present in the meantime. Be aware of his presence. "He has not left us or forsaken us." 4:17. He says, "We who are alive, we who are left, will be caught up together with them in the air to meet the Lord. And we will always be with him." We're always going to be with the Lord. John 14, Jesus talks about that with his disciples. He just told them, "I'm going away. I'm leaving you, but here's what you need to understand. I'm going to ask the Father and he will give you another helper." The Holy Spirit, he's talking about. "And he will be with you forever. Even the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive, because it doesn't know him and doesn't see him, but you know him. He dwells with you and he dwells in you."

You're never apart from him. You say, "Well, I could see living for that day when Jesus returns, and I want to be living in such a way that he catches me doing good when he comes. Not catches me doing what I might normally be doing. I hope he catches me doing good." He says, "Look, I want you to understand. He is with you now."

"By his Spirit, he is dwelling within you." So if you want to know, "God, what is it you want me to do?" Ephesians 5:10 says, "That we're trying to discern what's pleasing to the Lord." The easiest thing, we got a book that tells us, and then we got the Spirit dwelling inside us to be able to consult with him. "Lord, do you want me to do this malicious thing?" "No, I don't." "Okay. Lord, do you want me to look at this?" "No, I don't want you to do." "Lord, do you want me to eat that much?" "No. This is the temple of the Holy Spirit." That's what Paul asked in Corinth. He says, "Do you not understand? Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. He's swelling in you." Live as if he were present within you, because you know he is. So anything that you wouldn't do with your two year old granddaughter, right? Or your 87 year old grandmother, you probably would not want to do, when the Spirit's living in you. And he is always, always in you and with you.

So in 1 John 3, he says, "Beloved, it's clear we're God's children now. And what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, because we're going to see him as he is." But right now let's live in anticipation of that day, by being aware of his presence, his abiding presence in us now.

Yeah, he's coming, but don't forget, he's already sent his Spirit who's here. So anything that you wouldn't do on the day he's coming, you don't do now, because his Spirit is already there. And anything that you would do because you would love to be found doing that when he comes, you would graciously and gladly do now, because his Spirit in you is affirming and empowering and confirming that this is the will of God. Walk in that. Yes, I want you to do that. Be aware of his presence.

Lastly, he says, "You need each other. Be accountable to his people. I put you in the Body of Christ together. I want you to understand that you are to be together in this thing." Verse 18 of chapter four says this way, "Encourage one another with these words." Jesus is coming again. Be encouraged by this. And then verse 11 here in chapter five, "Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact, you're also doing." In 4:1, he says, "And because you're doing this, great. But excel still more. Get better and better at it."

Now, you know how many friends you have who have not come back to Church since COVID. Well, they don't want to catch anything. It may be that they didn't catch anything before they left. The work of the Spirit may not have prompted in them, the desire, the need to encourage others in their walk with Christ. "I don't need the Church to be a Christian." Bible says you do. I'm kind of going to go with what the Bible said to you. And so we need each other. We come together. We are accountable to each other. We want to encourage each other. We want to walk with each other. We want to speak truth to each other, with love. We want to surround each other with love and abandon all self-interest, to be able to just be with each other

for the Glory of Christ. We surround ourselves with those who will encourage us to always be ready, live that way. And we want to always surround ourselves with those who are going to help us faithfully to grow in godliness. That's what he's given us, as a privilege of being a part of the kingdom people. "Don't forsake your assembling together as it is the habit of some." That's what says in Hebrews 10.

Come together. We need each other. Especially during these times, we need their support. And so he says, "Look, the fact that I'm coming again should ..." Just hear. He says, "It should make your pulse increase a little bit." It should make your heart pound a little harder and faster, when you start thinking about, "He's coming again and it could be now. It could be today. It could be before sunset. It could be before the sunrise. I don't know when it's going to be. I'm going to live this day as if it were my last on earth, because it matters for the Glory of God."

Focused lives need a focal point, so Jesus says, "Let me be that for you. Fix your eyes on me, the right hand of the Father, that where I am, you will be focused. And where that focus is where your praise will be, and your priorities will be set and your mindset will be, and your behavior, your conduct, your character, all will be aligned with what you see when your eyes are focused on me." So he says, "Be alert. I'm coming again. Beware that you not walk according to the sons of darkness. So be alert and then be aware that I'm with you already, and will be to the ends of the earth, through the power of the Holy Spirit."

Thirdly, be accountable. Get together with other believers and prepare for his coming now, because you don't know when it's going to be and you don't want to be caught off guard in a bad way when by the Spirit of God, you can be blessed by his way. Amen?

Let's be ready for his coming. Let's pray. Father, thank you. Thank you that you love us enough to make the way clear for us to come and walk with you and experience the fullness of your grace now. Lord, we know that when we see you face to face when you come, or when we die and go to be with you, we will be made like you then. But Father, as the bride is adorned for her wedding day, we the Church, the Bride of Christ, every day are getting up as if this were the wedding day. And we awaken to the reality that Lord, you have done everything necessary to prepare us for that.

May our readiness be sealed, not just because there's a warning of the consequences of not. But Father, because there's the incredible blessing of what it means to be the people made holy and fit for the King of Glory. Lord Jesus come, and we will share with others who are in the darkness, this great news of light until many trust you. And we will live distinctively as the bride until you get here. But in all things Lord, we want to live in readiness for the return of the King. We praise you for it and we look forward to Jesus, you coming. So in your name we pray. Amen.



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