



### Preparing for the Unexpected

*Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)*

Although it's slightly outdated, you may be familiar with the National Geographic series *Doomsday Preppers*. If not, the title says it all. It was a show dedicated to people spending vast sums of money preparing bunkers where they could safely ride out a nuclear war or a societal collapse. Each episode showcased elaborate bunkers deep beneath the ground complete with water filtration systems, air exchanges, stockpiles of weapons, boobytraps, and mountains of food. One of the main things of course being, no one knows when such a catastrophe might take place—could be a massive solar flare that knocks out the power grid, an asteroid, a revolution, an EMP attack. No matter what though, a diehard prepper always has to be ready for the unexpected.

Similarly, in 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul encourages Christians to be "preppers" of a sort—not those who have enough resources safely stored away to survive a cataclysmic event—but who are always ready for Jesus to return on the Last Day. We are to live each day—yes, even every moment—prepared for our Lord to return because as Jesus himself said (and Paul reiterates here) no one but God knows when that moment will be (cf. Mark 13:32). The destruction of the world will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night, and suddenly, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and no one, not even the most dedicated doomsday prepper, will be able to escape.

Although Christ's coming will be unexpected for us all, it need not catch us believers unawares or cause us great alarm. For while we don't know WHEN Jesus will return, trusting in his Word of promise, we know that he WILL, and so in that sense Paul encourages all Christians of every age to live ready.

But what does that mean? Does that mean we sell all we have, give it to the poor and spend our days staring up into the sky? No. Rather it means living like children of the day, living like the sons and daughters of God that

he has made us, who the good fight by exerting Spirit-empowered self-control over our sinful appetites, and arming ourselves with faith, love and the hope of salvation.

Judgement Day need not terrify us in any way because it is the day of our final redemption. As Paul says, “God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” By God’s grace we will not suffer condemnation and eternal torment with the wicked and unbelieving world because we trust that the punishment we rightly deserve has been put on Jesus instead and so we will inherit eternal life. With that as our confidence we can live each day—be that our dying day or even the Last Day—in absolute fearlessness and joy because whatever happens we are and will be with Jesus. Pass that message along to your family and friends today so that they too can be fully prepared through faith in Christ for his unexpected return!

*Prayer: Dear Savior, since no one knows the hour of your return, keep me always watchful and ready for the Last Day. Wake me from my spiritual slumber and apathy so that I no longer indulge in the sinful deeds of darkness but live each day clothed in your righteousness and protected by the armor of light. Come quickly dear Jesus. Amen.*