

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 “How to Be Ready For The Rapture?”

Introduction

In the last study we looked at the topic of the Rapture of the Church in Chapter 4:13-18. Today, we are continuing with this topic of the Rapture.

1 Thes 5:1-11

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. 11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

5:1-2 Concerning the times and the seasons

1 Thes 5:1-2

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

A. But:

This is a “***disjunctive conjunction***” saying we are going to keep talking about the same topic, but going in a different direction with it.

- **In 4:13-18** Paul was addressing the question of what will happen to believers at the Rapture who have already died. Will they not experience the wonderful moment of the Rapture?
- **Now in Chapter 5:1-11, Paul is answering a couple of questions:**
 - **When will the Rapture take place?** We are hearing different teachings on the subject that seems to not be consistent with what you taught.
 - **How should we live in the days before the Rapture?**

B. Concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you:

- The Thessalonians were well taught about the return of Jesus and other prophetic matters.
- Paul taught them about **the times and the seasons** regarding the return of Jesus.

- They had an idea of the prophetic **times** they lived in, and they could discern the **seasons** of the present culture. (Guzik)
- Again, we are impressed that Paul was with the Thessalonians only for a 3 Sabbaths, (**Act 17:20**) or 4 weeks at the most.
- In that time, he taught them about the prophetic **times and seasons** regarding the return of Jesus.

Jesus criticized the religious leaders of His day because they could not discern the signs of the times, of the Messiah's coming (i.e. Jesus 1st coming):

Matt 16:1-3

1 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; 3 "and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, **but you cannot discern the signs of the times.**

All of us should also study the Scriptures, and look to the world around us, so we can be aware of the **times and the seasons.**

The sons of Issachar became the leaders of Israel because they set out to know the times:

1 Chr 12:32

...of **the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do**, their **chiefs were** two hundred; **and all their brethren were at their command;**

C. The Day of the Lord so comes:

With this phrase, Paul quoted a familiar Old Testament idea.

The phrase "Day of the LORD" **26 times in the Old Testament:**

(Is. 2:12; 13:6, 9; 34:8; Jer. 46:10; Lam. 2:22; Eze. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph 1:7,8,14,18; 2:2,3; Zech 14:1; Mal. 4:5)

The idea behind the phrase **the Day of the Lord** is that this is **God's time.**

Quote: (Guzik)

"Man has had his "day," and the Lord will also have "His Day".

Here in this context:

- In the ultimate sense, **the Day of the Lord** is fulfilled with **Jesus judging the earth and returning in glory.**
- It does **not refer to a single day**, but to **a season** when God rapidly advances His agenda to the end of the age.

Quote: (Hiebert)

"It denotes the day when God intervenes in history to:

1. **Judge His enemies,**

2. **Deliver His people** (i.e. the Jewish nation)
3. **Establish His kingdom** (millennial reign of Christ).”

D. For you yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night:

Perfectly

The Greek word (akribos) – exactly, **accurately**, diligently

- These people completely understood that the Lord’s coming would come suddenly.
- Paul had only been with the church for a month, and during that time he had made a point of teaching them about this complicated subject.

Note: (In contrast today)

It is possible today for someone to go to church for years and not hear about the Rapture, signs of His coming, and the Lord’s return at the Second Coming.

thief

The Greek word (kleptes) – an embezzler, pilferer

Here in this verse, a thief is one who “**sneakily**” **breaks into your house** at night and steals from you **while you’re unaware**.

Jesus used the same terminology to describe His return.

Matthew 24:43–44

43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, **he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into**.

44 **Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**

- Jesus taught that, that day would remain unknown, and come as a surprise, **as a thief in the night**.
- A **thief** does not announce the exact time of his arrival.

We talked about this last week, 4:13-18

There is an aspect of the Second Coming that **will be unexpected**.

1 Cor 15:52

52 **in a moment**, in **the twinkling of an eye**, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Jesus said of that exact day and hour no one knows:

Matt 24:36

36 **“But of that day and hour no one knows**, not even the angels of heaven, **but My Father only**.

Note:

We can know, and are supposed to know the “times” and the “seasons” of the Rapture!

One of the signs and seasons:

5:3 When they falsely say, “Peace and safety”!!

1 Thes 5:3

For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

A. For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them:

- Many will buy into the lie, “All is well”, “Be at Peace”, “Finally all things on the Earth are in control and at peace”!!!
- The unexpected nature of that day will be a tragedy for the unbeliever and possibly the carnal Christian.
- They will be lulled to sleep by political and economic conditions, but they will be rudely awakened.
- They will hear the frightening verdict, **“they shall not escape.”**

B. As labor pains upon a pregnant woman:

The phrase **labor pains** suggest both inevitability and unexpectedness.

- A pregnant woman knows that her time is getting near.
- Her tummy grows bigger and bigger.
- The doctor gives her a time frame of when the baby might be coming.
- She knows that one day it will really happen.
- Sometimes the baby doesn’t come when the doctor said it would.
- But it will come.

5:4-5 this Day should overtake you as a thief

1 Thes 5:4-5

4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

A. But you, brethren, are not in darkness:

God has made us **sons of the light and sons of the day.**

The time when we were **of the night or of the darkness** is in the past.

So now we simply have to live up to what God has made us.

Note:

Interesting that the Bible doesn’t say, once we are Christians we are to “try to be a light”. But God tells us by our very nature of being born-again, that we are the light of the world (**Matt 5:14-16**), just as Jesus was the Light of the world (**John 8:12; 9:5**).

Jesus tells us, who believe in Him and/or follow Him, we will never be in darkness:

John 8:12

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. **He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness**, but have the light of life."

John 12:46

I have come as a light into the world, **that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness**.

The Tribulation period will be a time of Darkness:**Amos 5:18**

Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! For what good is the day of the LORD to you? **It will be darkness, and not light.**

Amos 5:20

Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light?
Is it not very dark, with no brightness in it?

John tells us that our future has no darkness in it at all, because of our fellowship with Jesus:**1 John 1:5-7**

5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that **God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.**

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

7 But **if (i.e. since) we walk in the light as He is in the light,** we have fellowship with one another, **and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

Very Important note:

Even as we walk in the light, we still sin and need God's forgiveness and cleansing along the way.

B. That this Day should over take you as a thief:

Paul means that this should not happen for the believer who lives according to their nature as a son of **light** and son of the **day**.

They will or at least should be automatically ready for the return of Jesus Christ.

Even though it will be a surprise for everybody, because no one knows the day or the hour, **(Matt 24:36)**.

On the other hand, Even though there is a sense in which the Rapture will happen unexpectedly, there is also a sense in which it's going to be obvious that we are close, and so we are ready.

Jesus said,

Matthew 24:33

33 "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors!

If you are looking for the Lord's return, it will be evident that He's almost here.

C. There seems to be "2 Truths" communicated here:

1. Those who **are not in darkness**, who live as they **are all sons of light and sons of the day**, these are ready for the return of Jesus.
2. **But if we are in darkness** – perhaps caught up in some of the sin Paul warned against previously in this letter – then we are not ready and need to make ourselves ready for the return of Jesus.

Paul gives such warning and exhortations in other letters:

Rom 13:11-14

11 And do this, knowing the time, **that now it is high time to awake out of sleep**; for now **our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.**

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand.

Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

14 But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and **make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**

Opposite side of the same coin:

Gal 5:16

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and **you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**

Paul is now going to address those who find themselves wondering if they are ready!

5:6-8 let us not sleep..... but let us watch and be sober.

1 Thes 5:6-8

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

A. Therefore let us not sleep:

Sleep:

Paul is using "sleep" here differently than he did in Chapter 4:

1. Sleep in Ch. 4:14

The Greek word (koimao) – sleep, calm, quiet, to fall asleep, to die.

2. Sleep in Ch. 5:6,7,10

The Greek word (katheudo) – sleep, to fall asleep, to die; but also has the idea to be slothful; to be indifferent

- Here he's talking about people who aren't alert and looking for the Lord's return.

- Paul is saying that our spiritual condition should never be marked by **sleep**.
- Spiritually speaking, we need to be active and aware, to **watch, and be sober**.

Not sleep, but be sober:

Sober:

The Greek word (nepho) – sober, **watchful**, to be temperate, **circumspect**

Peter uses this several times and gives us the right since of the word:

1 Peter 1:13

Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, **be sober**, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Peter 4:7

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be **serious (KJV – sober) and watchful** in your prayers.

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

God wants us to be “spiritually” alert, “spiritually” sharp and aware of what’s going on around us in our world.

B. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night:

Paul is contrasting the “day” with the “night”.

People of the “night” are the ones who sleep (who aren’t paying attention) and are drunk (not in control of their faculties).

Quote: (Guzik)

- The opposite of spiritual watchfulness is to be ***“spiritually” asleep***.
- The opposite of spiritual sobriety is to be ***“spiritually” drunk***.
- As Christians we are **of the day**, and so we must **watch and be sober**.

C. Putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation:

This is how we express our sobriety, putting on our armor for the day of battle.

This is how to be sober as a Christian in these last days!!

In Paul’s day, the Roman soldier was a common sight.

Paul used the images of a soldier’s armor to illustrate the idea of watchfulness. A soldier is a good example of someone who must **watch and be sober**, and he is equipped to do that with his armor.

Faith and love:

- **Faith and love** are represented by **the breastplate** because the **breastplate** covers the vital organs.

- No soldier would ever go to battle without his **breastplate**, and no Christian is equipped to live the Christian life without **faith and love**.

Hope:

- **The hope of salvation** is represented **as a helmet**, because the **helmet** protects the head, which is just as essential as the **breastplate**.
- **Hope** isn't used in the sense of wishful thinking, but in the sense of a confident expectation of God's hand in the future.

Note:

Some twelve years later Paul would be writing to the Ephesians and would also mention armor (**Ephesians 6:10–13**)

Even if we grade ourselves as not very ready, it does not change our “eternal salvation”!!!

5:9-10 God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation

1 Thes 5:9-10

9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
10 Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

A. There is a day, that God will bring His wrath upon sinful man:

Isaiah 26:21a

For behold, the LORD comes out of His place **to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity**; ...

B. For God did not appoint us to wrath:

Before we had the hope of salvation we had an appointment **to wrath**.

Paul begins this letter with this very point:

1 Thes 1:10

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, **even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come**.

We have been rescued from the **wrath** of God, the **wrath** that we deserve.

John 3:36

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, **but the wrath of God abides on him**."

Eph 2:2-3

2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, **and were by nature children of wrath**, just as the others.

C. But to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ

Eph 2:4-5

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 **even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)**,

We no longer have an appointment to wrath, but now to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

When Jesus died on the cross, He stood in our place, in our appointment **to wrath**.

As believers, when we think we are appointed **to wrath**, we show up for an appointment that was cancelled by Jesus.

D. Who died for us:

- The idea is that Jesus died in our place.
- Not simply that Jesus died for us in the sense as a favor for us; but that He **died** as a substitute for us.

Rom 6:23

For **the wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus died for us paying those wages that we could not pay!!

Gal 1:4

Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might **deliver us from this present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father,

2 Cor 5:21

For He made Him who knew no sin **to be sin for us**, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Isaiah 53:4-6

4 Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 **But He was wounded for our transgressions,**

He was bruised for our iniquities;

The **chastisement** (*i.e. crucifixion*) for our peace was upon Him,

And by His stripes we are healed.

6 **All we** like **sheep** have **gone astray**;

We have turned, every one, to his own way;

And the LORD has **laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**

E. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation:

Even if you are struggling today with walking obediently with the Lord, He is faithful, and you will be saved from the wrath to come.

Referring to any and all wrath that God is going to bring:

1. Wrath during the Tribulation Period.

Wrath that is going to be poured out on the earth in judgment:

Rev 6:15-17

15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and **from the wrath of the Lamb!**
17 "**For the great day of His wrath has come**, and who is able to stand?"

Rev 14:9-10

9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand,
10 "**he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God**, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

2. Wrath in the final Day of Judgment, for sin.

Rom 5:1

Therefore, **having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,**

Rom 5:9

Much more then, having now **been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath** through Him.

But to obtain salvation

John 3:16

16 "For God so loved the world that **He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should **NOT PERISH** but **have everlasting life.**

F. If you have believed in Jesus, your salvation is "eternally secure":

1. Jesus has us until the day of Jesus Christ, or the end of our lives:

Phil 1:6

...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it **until the day of Jesus Christ;**

Matt 28:20b

... and **lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**" Amen.

Heb 13:5b

For He Himself has said, "**I will never leave you nor forsake you.**"

Psalms 23:6

Surely **goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;**
And **I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.**

2. Because God is faithful and His nature unchanging:**2 Tim 2:13**

13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful;
He cannot deny Himself.

1Thes 5:24

He Who calls you is faithful, Who also will do it.

Heb 13:8

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and **forever.**

James 1:17

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the **Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.**

3. Because God will never let us go**John 10:27-30**

27 "**My sheep** hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

28 "And **I give them eternal life,** and **they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.**

29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and **no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.**

30 "I and My Father are one."

4. Because Salvation is a "GIFT" from God, and not dependent on ourselves or our works:**Eph 2:8-9**

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; **it is the gift of God,** 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Rom 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but **the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus** our Lord.

Rom 11:29

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (*i.e. unchangeable*).

2 Cor 9:15

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

5. **Because salvation is not kept by us, but by God and His power**

1 Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to an inheritance **incorruptible** and **undefiled** and that **does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you**, 5 who are **kept by the power of God** through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

- **incorruptible**
- **undefiled**
- **does not fade away**
- **reserved in heaven for you**
- **kept by the power of God**

6. **Because It is the will of the Father, that all who believe would be kept by God until the end.**

John 6:39

This is the will of the Father Who sent Me, that of all He has given Me **I should lose nothing**, but **should raise it up at the last day**.

John 6:40

"And **this is the will of Him Who sent Me**, that **everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life**; and **I will raise him up at the last day**."

John 6:37

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and **the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out**."

G. **Whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him:**

- Having obtained **salvation through our Lord Jesus**, we will always **live together with Him**.
- The promise of unity with Jesus can't be broken; no matter if we live or die (**wake or sleep**), we will always be **with Him**. (Guzik)

Paul makes it clear in Romans 8:

Rom 8:31-35

31 What then shall we say to these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us? (*i.e. yourself, others, the devil or demons*)

32 He who did **not spare His own Son**, but **delivered Him up for us all**, **how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?**

33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? (*i.e. who has the power to condemn?*)

It is God who justifies.

34 **Who is he who condemns?** *i.e. yourself, others, the devil or demons*)

It is Christ Who died, and furthermore is also risen, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also makes intercession for us.

Note: (Jesus alone can judge to condemnation, or unto salvation)

John 5:22

For the Father judges no one, but **has committed all judgment to the Son,**

Rom 14:4

Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls.

Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Rom 14:9

For **to this end Christ died and rose and lived again,** that **He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.**

Paul continues on in Romans 8:

Rom 8:37-39

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

38 For I am persuaded that **NEITHER LIFE NOR DEATH,** nor angels nor principalities nor powers, **NOR THINGS PRESENT NOR THINGS TO COME,**

39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, **shall be able to separate us** from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

5:11 Once again, the command to “comfort each other” as in Chapter 4

1 Thes 5:11

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

A. Therefore comfort each other:

Paul again tells us not to take comfort, **BUT TO GIVE COMFORT.**

Quote: (Guzik)

“If all Christians have a heart to **comfort each other**, then all will be comforted”.

B. And edify one another:

To **edify** means to build up.

The idea is to be a church full of active participants, not passive spectators.

C. Just as you also are doing:

But they had to continue to comfort others, and to do it more and more.

2 Thes 3:13

But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.

Conclusion

How do we build each other up?

By grace and through grace!!!

2 Tim 2:1

You therefore, my son, **be strong in the grace** that is in Christ Jesus.

Titus 2:11-12

11 **For the grace of God that brings salvation** has appeared to all men,

(The same grace that brings salvation, is the same grace that brings us into "sanctification")

12 **teaching us** that, **denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,**

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, **full of grace and truth.**

John 1:16

And **of His fullness we have all received,** and **grace for grace.**