

## To the Church of the Thessalonians – Their Hope

### 1 Thessalonians 5

#### Introduction

1. From the beginning of their faith the Thessalonians have eagerly anticipated meeting their Lord (1:10).
  2. Paul made sure to grant them comfort with some information addressing an ignorance that caused some trouble in anticipation of that day (4:13-18).
  3. As he closes the epistle, the apostle reminds the brethren about the suddenness of the coming of Christ, and their need to be prepared for it.
  4. The chapter demonstrates what spiritual vigilance consists of – it is not physically gazing at the heavens or attempting to predict the time He returns. It involves living within the will of God, and helping our brethren do the same.
- I. Their Anticipation of the Day of the Lord (vv. 1-11)
- A. The Times and Seasons (vv. 1-3)
    - a. Paul continues his writing on the day of the Lord but shifts from addressing their ignorance (4:13) to reminding them of what they know (5:2).
    - b. They have been awaiting this great day since they obeyed (1:10). One can imagine their increased eagerness concerning what they would be learning in this epistle (4:15-17).
    - c. There is a seeming (though not real) difficulty in the instruction to be ready for WHEN the Lord comes and the fact that God has not told us WHEN He will come.
      - i. The world has grappled with this idea for some time, with many predictions being made.
      - ii. It is a failure from the start to seek what the Lord has purposely concealed (cf. Deuteronomy 29:29).
      - iii. Paul sees no difficulty but makes it plain how the brethren can be ready for that day.
    - d. (v. 1) – “the times and the seasons” – cf. Acts 1:6-7 – not for us to know, but in the Father’s authority. (cf. Isaiah 46:8-10 – God started history, has had His hand involved in history, and will end history)
      - i. (v. 1b) – Paul taught them this at the beginning.
      - ii. “times” (*chronos*, as time in general), “seasons” (*Kairos*, as a set or definite point of time)
    - e. (v. 2) – “For you yourselves know full well...” (NASB)
      - i. “the day of the Lord” – expression found in the prophets concerning judgment, and manifestation of God’s holiness and wrath, but also deliverance of His people (included judgment of His people too).
      - ii. **As a thief** – they do not announce their coming, and seek to come when an owner of the house is unaware (cf. Matthew 24:36-44)

- f. **(v. 3)** – metaphor of sudden labor pains for a pregnant woman – inevitable, painful.
  - i. **“they”** – introduces a contrast for the rest of the text.
  - ii. The **“brethren” (v. 1)** are contrasted with the world – light and darkness, being prepared vs unprepared.
  - iii. **“Peace and safety”** – represents complacency.
- B. Their Relation to Light **(vv. 4-11)**
  - a. **(v. 2)** – thieves come during the night’s cover when men are unaware and their senses are at a disadvantage.
  - b. **Christians are characterized by light, not darkness – (vv. 4-5)**
    - i. **Darkness** – spiritually represents ignorance and sin – **“IN darkness”** = outside of God’s word (**cf. Psalm 119:105**) = outside of God’s fellowship (**cf. 1 John 1:5-6**).
      - 1. **(vv. 2-3)** – **“YOU...KNOW perfectly...THEY say, ‘Peace and safety!’”**
      - 2. **Overtake** – *katalambanō* – “to come upon someone, with implication of surprise, catch” (BDAG)
        - a. This won’t happen for Christians!
    - ii. **Sons of** – characterized by – they are enlightened (**cf. 2 Corinthians 4:6; Hebrews 6:4; John 3:21**).
      - 1. **2 Peter 1:19-21** – in context of the coming of the lord – prophetic word to bring you to light, preparing you for that Day through fellowship with Jesus.
  - c. **Warning – Christians can relapse into darkness if they are not careful – (vv. 6-7)**
    - i. **Being characterized by the light involves diligent activity on the Christian’s part – it is by the grace of God that we are informed, and equipped for the coming Day, but we must be spiritually vigilant.**
    - ii. **(v. 6)** – Don’t sleep (spiritually) – unaware, disengaged, inactive, defenseless/vulnerable.
      - 1. **Watch** – awareness, anticipation, readiness.
      - 2. **Sober** – self-controlled, fullness of spiritual faculties, undistracted.
    - iii. **(v. 7)** – if you sleep or imbibe intoxicants you will be in the night!
      - 1. Taking a general truth and applying it spiritually.
      - 2. People sleep at night and get drunk at night.
      - 3. Christians who are not vigilant and active, but who are insensitive to ungodliness, and engaged in it themselves **WILL BE OVERTAKEN (v. 4)!**
  - d. **Exhortation – the proper activity of those who are in the light (v. 8)**
    - i. **Be sober** – i.e. not inebriated, thus, self-controlled, with clarity of mind.

- ii. **“Having put on...” (NASB)** – i.e. this is further description of activity providing for such sobriety. (**cf. Ephesians 6:11; Romans 13:12**)
    - 1. **Breastplate of faith and love** – faithfulness to God (**1:8** – activity in the word), and love for God and brethren (**4:9-10**).
      - a. Protecting the core of our being from the attacks of Satan as it is fully engaged in relationship to God and His people.
    - 2. **Helmet of hope of salvation** – confident expectation of final reward of eternal fellowship with God in heaven.
      - a. Protecting our mind from the allure of the instant gratification of the world, knowing there is something far better for those who wait.
  - e. **Purpose – the reason for our activity in the light (vv. 9-11)**
    - i. (**vv. 9-10**) – the terrible day of judgment is made a day to anticipate with great joy for those who have partaken of Jesus’ sacrifice.
      - 1. **The difference between “YOU” and “THEY” is the willingness to partake in God’s desire for man.**
      - 2. Those in Christ have hope by God’s design.
      - 3. (**v. 10**) – regardless of whether we face physical death (**4:14**).
    - ii. (**v. 11**) – knowing the Lord’s coming, and what measures are to be taken in preparation, we ought to comfort and encourage each other.
      - 1. **4:18** – speaks of **“words”** with which to comfort each other.
      - 2. The whole of **verses 1-10** should be constantly considered for encouragement and edification.
      - 3. However, Paul will go on to show how else we encourage and edify.
- II. Their Preparation for the Day of the Lord (**vv. 12-22**)
- A. **“And”** – *de* – continuative.
    - a. They have been instructed to be of the day/light lest the Day of the Lord overtake them.
    - b. They have been instructed to comfort and edify each other.
    - c. The rest of the chapter gives practical exhortations and admonitions that accomplish such.
    - d. This is about being prepared for Christ’s return!
  - B. In Relation to Their Leaders (**vv. 12-13**)
    - a. If Christians are to be prepared for the Day of the Lord, they must make full use of what God has determined necessary – **Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5** – the accountability and care of the elders.

- b. **Recognize** – *eidō* – to see, thus, to know – “Recognize them for what they are, and as entitled to respect because of their office.” (Vincent) – **“appreciate” (NASB); “respect” (ESV)**
    - i. **Hebrews 13:7, 17** – as examples to respect and follow, and as those to trust, submitting to their leadership knowing it is with our best interest in mind according to the will of God.
    - ii. **(v. 13)** – they should be held in high esteem – **IN LOVE** – **i.e. the activity of esteeming them highly is in the realm of love – i.e. not in empty words or flattery, but by active, biblical love – including fulfillment of roles.**
  - c. They:
    - i. **Labor among you** – their position is one of intense work on behalf of the congregation.
    - ii. **Over you** – they preside over the members for their spiritual safety and direction.
    - iii. **Admonish you** – they seek to show you the way of truth and warn you about spiritual danger.
  - d. **(v. 13b)** – verb, present, active – i.e. continue being at peace – part of this relation to elders, and making their job with joy, not grief.
- C. In Relation to Their Brethren **(vv. 14-15)**
- a. In any congregation there is an assortment of circumstances among the members – members have different needs and are facing different challenges. We should all be mindful of each other (**cf. Romans 12:5**) and help in any way we can according to scripture.
  - b. **Warn the unruly** – those who are out of line with Christ’s word need to be reminded about judgment, and their behavior disapproved **(vv. 3, 6-7).**
  - c. **Comfort the fainthearted** – *oligopsuchos* – “lit., “small-souled” (*oligos*, “small,” *psuche*, “the soul”)” (VINE); “of one who feels his resources are too small for a given situation fainthearted, despondent, discouraged; substantively fainthearted person” (ALGNT)
    - i. Whether due to persecution, personal guilt, sorrow, intimidation, feeling inadequate, etc.
    - ii. They need to be urged to pursue the course of Christ with confidence.
  - d. **Uphold the weak** – in conscience, in faith, in physical health, in finances, etc. – regardless of the object of their weakness, rather than allowing them to fail, or causing them to fall, we should do what we can to hold them up and strengthen them!
  - e. **Be patient with all** – *makrothymēō* – ““to be long-tempered” (*makros*, “long,” *thumos*, “temper”)” (VINE) – the unruly, fainthearted, weak, and those who do evil to you can provoke you to anger, exasperation, quitting, etc. – be long-suffering – persevering in doing what is right.

- f. **(v. 15)** – **Do not retaliate evil, but pursue good** – **cf. Romans 12:21** – if our aim is to promote what is good according to God, then if we are wronged we should fight darkness with light, and hate with love.
- D. In Relation to Their God **(vv. 16-22)**
  - a. **Rejoice** – **cf. Philippians 4:4** – in the Lord, no matter our circumstances, there is constant cause for joy – commanded.
  - b. **Pray** – this avenue of communication with our God needs to be in constant use! **(cf. Hebrews 4:16)**.
  - c. **Thanksgiving** – **cf. Colossians 3:16; Philippians 2:14-16** – we should be thankful concerning our relationship with God and each other – it is a privilege to serve God.
  - d. **These activities are a part of God’s will for us** – **“for you”** – *eis* – UNTO you – i.e. these are activities and mindsets that God has revealed unto us as expectations as His children.
  - e. **In relation to the word (vv. 19-21)** – rather than ignoring, opposing, and looking down on the Spirit’s revelation in the prophetic word, we must use it to discern good and evil.
- III. Their Confidence at the Day of the Lord **(vv. 23-28)**
  - A. The Sanctification by God **(vv. 23-24)**
    - a. In all of this, the Thessalonians, as well as us, were to have confidence knowing that it was the almighty God working in them to prepare them for the Day of the Lord – **2:13** – from their beginning to the end.
    - b. **God of peace** – His presence and work affords us peace in the anticipation of the coming day.
    - c. **Sanctify you completely** – noting the finality of our being set apart from the world, and consecrated to His glory.
    - d. **Spirit, Soul, Body** – the entire man – God is desirous of an undivided faithfulness to Him.
      - i. Without blame – righteous, holy, etc.
    - e. **(v. 24)** – God is faithful to His promises, and if we comply with His will He is going to accomplish in us what He has said He would.
  - B. The Fellowship of the Saints **(vv. 25-26)**
    - a. These mutual acts of love and concern bolster faith.
    - b. **(v. 25)** – Paul had just mentioned a prayer on their behalf and opened the epistle noting his prayers for the **(1:2)** – they should pray for him.
    - c. **(v. 26)** – knowing Paul and others care deeply for them would bring confidence.
  - C. The Decrees of the Lord **(v. 27)**
    - a. This letter is the word of God **(2:13)** – **cf. 1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Peter 3:15-16**
    - b. It is to be read – **Colossians 4:16** – such would equip brethren with what is necessary to grow and please God, being ready for judgment.
  - D. The Grace of Jesus **(v. 28)**

- a. The whole epistle represents the grace of Christ and is what would carry them through to eternal life beyond the judgment.
- b. This is Paul's encouragement and wish that they grow in it – **2 Peter 3:18**

**Conclusion**

1. The Thessalonians serve as an excellent example of conversion, endurance, growth, and living with hope.
2. Their introduction to the gospel was an introduction into an entirely new, unique, and superior existence in Christ Jesus.
3. The Christian longs for that relationship with Christ to reach its fullest extent when He comes again, and until that Day arrives we are to live like it is tomorrow.