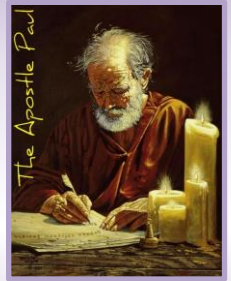


THESSALONIANS

There Is Hope!



Lesson 08: Future Hope: Part I ... [1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11]

PREVIEW

Paul reminds believers that we are exempt from persecution in that future day of the Lord's wrath - the Great Tribulation period; a time that will overtake the world like a thief in the night. Paul warns all believers to not be caught off guard - *to not be found sleeping*. Paul instructs us to watch and be sober, to comfort and edify one another with the assurance that our salvation is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible predicts a time of severe judgment on planet Earth prior to Christ's coming to set up His Kingdoms - old Earth and new Earth. The Old Testament prophets were distinct in their predictions of just such a time. Most of the book of Revelation describes that future time when God will send His wrath upon the Earth before the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 6-19). Here in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 Paul presents a picture of the Day of the Lord and explains the relationship of believers in the church age to that future time.

DAY OF THE LORD: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-3

Paul uses the phrase "*concerning the times and the seasons*" to mark off this new section of thought. Paul states that he did not need to write anything to them about "*the times and the seasons*".

TIMES: *chronos* (khro'-nos): make reference to time chronologically (clock or the calendar).

SEASONS: *kairos* (kī-ro's): focus on events in the period.

Used together the two words are a common formula for the end-time days. The Thessalonian believers were very much aware of what Paul had taught them, and his teachings included end-times (*eschatological*) event.

Jesus instructed His disciples that they are not to know the "*times*" or the "*seasons*" for His return (Act 1:6-7).

The Thessalonian believers knew full well or precisely what the Day of the Lord was all about. By using the phrase "*Day of the Lord*" in verse 2, Paul is referencing a familiar Old Testament theme.

The day of the Lord is a time when God intervenes in history to judge His enemies, deliver His people, and establish His kingdoms - on the old and new earths. From the Old Testament scriptures, two major tracks of identification emerge for the meaning of the term "*the Day of the Lord*".

1. It sometimes refers to an **event** such as when Christ sets His feet on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1-19).
2. Other times it is used to express a **period of time** where God judges throughout (Joel 2:1-16).

The way in which one defines the term "*the Day of the Lord*" will color your view of the timing of the Tribulation. For those who believe the term is "**event-based**", i.e., *Christ's Second Coming*, will be in the Post-tribulation camp, while those who believe the term is "**period-of-time-based**", i.e., *Daniel's 70th week (seven week period)*, will be in the Pre-tribulation camp.

Here is a just a sampling of "*Day of the Lord*" scriptures: Amos 5:18-20, Zephaniah 1:14-18, Joel 2:1-16, Jeremiah 30:7, Malachi 4:1, Isaiah 13:9-13, Matthew 24:21-22.

The Thessalonian believers knew, and had been taught, that they could not know the day of Jesus' return. 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.

The main idea that Paul wanted to stress is that "*the Day of the Lord*" will come suddenly on an unsuspecting world. He uses two illustrations to make his claim.

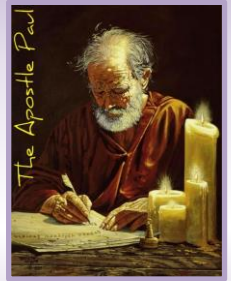
1. It will come as a **thief in the night** (5:2,4)
2. It will come like **birth pains upon a pregnant woman** (5:3)

Paul certainly was not one to set dates in regard to prophecy, and Jesus forbade setting dates when He said of that day and hour no one knows (Matthew 24:36). God wants this day to be unexpected, but He expects His people to be prepared for the unexpected.

Paul uses the phrase "*labor pains*", in verse 3, to suggest both inevitability and unexpectedness. Jesus used the same idea in Matthew 24:8, when He spoke of calamities proceeding the end times as the beginning of sorrows,

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which is literally the beginning of “*labor pains*”. The idea is both of giving birth to a new age, and implying an increase of intensity and frequency in these calamities. Here is a sampling of scriptures that relate to birth pains: **NT**: Matthew 24:8; Mark 13:8; **OT**: Isaiah 13:8-9; Jeremiah 4:31; Hosea 13:13; Micah 4:9.

SLEEP NOT: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:4-7

After reminding the Thessalonian believers that they and their deceased loved-ones will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and to be with Jesus forever in chapter 4, Paul then references the Day of the Lord in this chapter. In verses 4-7 Paul reminds the believers that they are not in darkness. They are waiting with the patience of hope and with the expectancy of Christ’s return. Therefore “*this Day*” will not overtake them as a thief. Waiting and watching believers will not be overcome by the element of surprise.

In verse 5 Paul makes the case that since believers do not belong to the night or of darkness, our spiritual condition should never be characterized by “*sleep*”. Spiritually speaking, we need to be active and aware, to “*watch*” and “*be sober*”. Note Paul used a different word for “*sleep*” in verses 6-7 than for the sleep of death mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:13. The word “*sleep*” here is used metaphorically to denote indifference to spiritual realities on the part of believers. It covers all sorts of moral and spiritual laxity or insensibility.

Notice the contrasts Paul used between awake (“*not sleep*”) and “*sleep*”, “*light*” and “*darkness*”, “*sober*” and “*drunk*”. The opposite of spiritual watchfulness is spiritual sleep and the opposite of spiritual sobriety is to be spiritually drunk. As believers we are of “*the day*”, and so we must “*watch*” and “*be sober*”.

SOBER

Does not mean humorless, but is defined as someone who knows the proper value of things, and therefore doesn't get too excited about the things of this world. The exact opposite of the person who lives their life for fun and entertainment, this person would not be considered sober.

NOT APPOINTED FOR WRATH: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:8-11

In verses 8-11 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.

In verse 8 Paul uses one of his favorite triplets - *faith, love and hope*. *Faith and love* are represented by the breastplate because the breastplate covers the vital organs, including the heart. No soldier would ever go to battle without his breastplate, and no Christian is equipped to live the Christian life without *faith and love*. The *hope* of salvation is represented as a helmet, because the helmet protects the head, which is just as essential as the breastplate. *Hope* does not mean wishful thinking, but a confident expectation of God's hand in the future. *Faith, love and hope* are the protection for our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:6-7).

Before we had the hope of salvation (verse 8), we had an appointment to *wrath* (verse 9). We no longer have an appointment to *wrath*, but now to obtain *salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ*. Paul is referring to the *wrath* of God. We are saved from the world, the flesh, and the devil. First and foremost, we are rescued from the *wrath* of God, the *wrath* that we deserve. Paul's whole context here is the believer's rescue from the *wrath* of God (Romans 1:18-20). Christ dies to *obtain* our salvation – *all three salvation tenses are secured in Him*.

JUSTIFICATION: SAVED from the PENALTY of SIN.

SANCTIFICATION: SAVED from the POWER of SIN.

GLORIFICATION: SAVED from the PRESENCE of SIN.

Paul concludes with the admonition to not take *comfort*, but to give *comfort*. If all Christians have a heart to *comfort* each other, then all will be comforted. *Edify* or build each other up - *do not tear down*.

Comfort and edify each other!