

**Text:** I Thessalonians 5:1-11 (End Times 2, Series A, November 8, 2020)

**Theme:** No More Maybes.

**Virtue** (basic truth): God gives us amazing confidence concerning his day and our salvation.

**Malady** (our problem): Reading a *maybe* into Jesus' return leads to impatient foolishness.

**Telic Note** (goal): By means of this sermon, the Spirit of Grace leads our hearts to a joyful expectation of the Savior's return, and a confident spirit until he does.

**Propositional Statement** (aim): *Maybes* don't have a be abysmal; and, certainly, there are areas where they're even fitting. But, in connection to things spiritual and life eternal, God speaks with such gracious confidence for us. Happily, he assures us of *no more maybes*.

**Specific Law in Text:** "So, then, let us not be like the others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled" (I Thessalonians 5:6).

**Specific Gospel in Text:** "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:9, 10).

**Doctrinal Thought:** God has already declared us innocent – even as we await the Last Day.

**Sanctification Thought:** *"Lord Jesus, in marvelous love, you died for every sin to declare the world innocent. Wondrous love, thank you! Even as the day of your return draws close, comfort my heart in the surety of my salvation. It's done. It's won. By grace. It's mine. By faith. In that certainty, dear Savior, bless me to live the life to which you've called me until I enjoy the eternal life you have in store for me. In your name I ask it. Amen!"*

### *I Thessalonians 5:1-11*

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you,<sup>2</sup> for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.<sup>5</sup> You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.<sup>6</sup> So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.<sup>7</sup> For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.<sup>8</sup> But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.<sup>9</sup> For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup> He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.<sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Short, simple, and sweet. But, because we have a Savior who lives, reigns, and will return, it's also stunning and sure: "*Grace and peace to you*" (I Thessalonians 1:1). Alleluia and Amen!

Even though they orient toward the optimistic, we live in a world of *maybes*. Not all wrong; certainly, there are conversations where *maybes* fit fine. But, often, inside of them, those *maybes* set us up for setbacks. Three examples:

- Maybe the Bucs will beat the Saints. Great! ... but, there's a chance they may not.
- Maybe my candidate will be secure in office. Good for me ... but, might not be the case.
- Maybe the humidity will stay low for a while. Hopeful ... but it is Florida.

None of those wishes are wrong, but each *maybe* – eager, hopefully, well-intentioned as it is – leaves room for disappointment. More we dwell on *maybes*, the more our confidence drains.

Again, in some conversations, totally ok – we get it! Sports are fluid. Politics, inconsistent. Forecast changes with a breeze. But, even if it doesn't, we've learned to adjust. Saints might beat the Bucs...and life will move on by Monday. Candidate might lose ... we're still blessed to live where and how we do. Humidity may be back ... our AC is tuned and ready.

But sometimes, *maybes* crush – especially when matters weigh heavy on our hearts.

- Others saw what you did; sure hope God didn't. But, *maybe* the Omniscient did...
- Hard to forgive myself – and it hurts. And if I can't, *maybe* Eternal I AM can't either...
- Treatment didn't go as hoped for, *maybe* it's too big for God, *maybe* he doesn't care...
- Been ages since Jesus promised his return. *Maybe* he's not coming back like he said...

Weighty instances with unstable *maybes* – especially as fear injects hearts, especially as consciences cry, bodies break, world reels. Then, those *maybes* haunt, hurt, and terrify! Especially as God remains God who sees and knows, is holy, is serious. Especially as we know our own sins! But, friends, comfort comes again as God speaks to show us again that he sees and knows, forgives and cares. And, today, even in connection to the Last Day, he lifts our hearts and our lives to appreciate the righteous reality and gracious eternity of ***no more maybes***.

Fair to say, the devil isn't afraid to use the uncertainty of our *maybes* to bring our hearts to doubt God's love and to despair God's timing. No surprise. Christians in Thessalonica are proof. They lived in the pandemic of persecution. Maybe God didn't notice. Every day was harder than the one before. Maybe God didn't care. Sin rose up in hearts, in homes, in church. Maybe God forgot. Grace in their hearts went unapplied to their lives. Maybe God wouldn't mind.

But that's why Paul encourages spiritually strugglers to celebrate the confidence and surety with which our God speaks, works, acts, and promises. And that means, in gospel grace – not unto us the glory! – there are **no more maybes** about the Lord's Day, the Lord's people, the Lord's will, and the Lord's work; **no more maybes** about God's Day, declaration of us, and decree for us. And that's Paul's focus and thrill in I Thessalonians 5. Heaven help us be glad in it, too!

Read the lesson already; we'll certainly refer back to it in this sermon. But as we get back into I Thessalonians 5, please realize: it's a really gracious thing that God leaves no *maybes* about his return. It's proof life here is not the goal; proof he's still interested; proof he's still invested – otherwise, he'd never tell us, and Jesus would have ascended to heaven and stepped away eternally. But, even as he presents the inevitable, Love serious and sublime carries the perfect balance of Law and Gospel. Whether anyone is ready for it or not, he'll be back – Day's set and certain in his calendar. And that dawn will come suddenly and seriously. Destruction for those who oppose him; deliverance for those who adore him. No other options. **No more maybes!**

That's marvelous! Do realize what it does: it lets the God who is perfectly holy maintain his justice; and the same God who is perfectly loving maintain his mercy. And it's bold to be glad in the beautiful balance of the relationship to which he's brought us. He's God – we're not. He's Creator – we're creation. He's Judge – we're judged. He's Father – we're his kids in all of it.

Catch that?! As packed with seriousness and suddenness as the day is, even as he talks about the intensity of his return, he is boldly gracious and graciously bold to remind us who we are. Look:

*“You are all sons of the light and sons of the day”* (I Thessalonians 5:5).

Such a simple and beautiful thing. *“Sons of the day.”* Matter-of-fact title emphasizes matter-of-grace reality. As we wait for the dawn of his return, we do so as *sons* awaiting for their Father and Friend, as *sons* waiting an inheritance. And that puts into perspective who it is we're waiting for. Our Savior. Our Forgiver. Our Friend. Our ... Brother. This is the relationship by grace. Through faith. No fear in that! **No more maybes** about it. In the joy of the gospel. In the confidence of your baptism. This is who he is. And this is who you are. Promise! And, in a beautiful way, in the confidence of grace, that relationship makes a difference in how we live.

We wait as sons brought into an unquestioned relationship with the Father. No longer caught up in the deeds of darkness. We wait as ones forgiven, ones already declared innocent, ones already redeemed. By grace, we wait with **no more maybes** in the confident joy of his declaration:

*“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 (physically living or physically dead), we may live together with him”* (I Thessalonians 5:9, 10).

Gracious, gospel-founded reality! **No more maybes.** No more “have I done enough,” “have I been good enough,” “were my intentions honest enough,” “was my church attendance regular enough?” **No more maybes.** Forgiveness is won. **No more maybes.** God is for us!

That means this beautiful thing of salvation – the wonderful afterlife in heaven on the day he returns as promised – is ours! **No more maybes!** We have it. By grace. Through faith. In Christ. It’s our possession. And we get to live like it. Not in spiritual insensitivity or spiritual drowsiness. Not in spiritual stupor or spiritual drunkenness. Not indulging in things that offend him, or excusing them in the wish that *maybe* he won’t mind. Instead, putting them away. Instead, in the joy of all that he has declared us to be, we live ready. And that means there’s **more maybes** about what he calls us to do or about the life he calls us to live in him. Be:

*“Self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet ... Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing”* (I Thessalonians 5:8).

Until he comes again, friends – and he will! – we have beautiful work to be about and we have a beautiful life to live. It’s the spiritual activity of putting away the deeds of darkness and living in the “strength under control” God still gives us. It’s the gospel-driven life characterized by “this is God’s Word” that confidently embraces the reality of God for us. It’s the mind occupied with the hope of salvation; relationships that support others and pray for others and help others in the way God would have us. It’s eyes, heart, and life, thoughts, words, and actions focused on our Jesus. And it’s thoughts, words and actions, that point others to his Word of Promise.

- *Maybe* God didn’t see the sin. Friends, he did. But he lets you see it confidently on Calvary, too – where he forgave it. **No more maybes!** Go tell someone that news!
- *Maybe* God doesn’t care. Friends, he does. See it confidently as he is relentless to remain *Immanuel – God with us.* **No more maybes!** Walk with him; share him
- *Maybe* Jesus won’t come back. Friends, he will. He promised. And, until he does, God establish us in his Word, bless us with the joy of the ministry he’s given us. **No more maybes** about it! We have work to do. Let’s get after it with hearts that smile to adore the One who is coming to take us home. **No more** maybes; that’s his promise!

Alleluia and Amen!