

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11  
The Legacy of Preparedness

Introduction

1. We have been making our way through 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians, which is actually Paul's second letter to them
2. It is filled with praise and encouragement for the Thessalonians because of the quality and character of their faith in Jesus
3. These are people we could—and should—emulate when it comes to our Christian lives
4. So far we have learned the importance of:
  - a. Imitation (imitating Christ)
  - b. Ministry (serving one another)
  - c. Encouragement (how it blesses both the recipient and the one who encourages)
  - d. Holiness (especially in the area of sexual purity)
  - e. Love (towards one another)
5. Last week we looked at hope—specifically, the hope we have for being reunited with Christ when He returns to rapture His Church
  - a. We saw that some of the Thessalonians were grieving their fellow Christians that had died
  - b. It appears that their main concern was that these “dead in Christ” would miss the rapture, that only those who are alive when Christ returns would see Him again
  - c. They may have been misled by false teaching that there was no resurrection of the dead (the very thing Paul had to address in 1 Corinthians)
  - d. However, Paul reassured them that both the dead in Christ, and those living, would meet Christ in the air when He comes back for His Church
  - e. We took away four things from this discussion:
    - 1) We have a hope that the world doesn't, and that hope should set us apart from the world
    - 2) Our hope is more than wishful thinking; it's a hope with certainty because it is based on God's promise and a historical fact (if God raised Jesus, He will raise us)
    - 3) Our hope is an eternal one, not a temporal one
    - 4) We are to encourage one another with a reminder of the hope we share in Christ
6. Where last week's passage focused on the Rapture of the Church, today's passage looks at another aspect to Christ's return which is referred to as the day of the Lord.

A. The day of the Lord will come with certainty, with suddenness and with judgment for those who do not know Him (5:1-3)

1. The Thessalonians had already been instructed in events surrounding the day of the Lord (1):  
**“Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you...”**
  - a. The phrase **“the times and the epochs”** here is a fairly general reference to future eschatological events including God's judgement of the world, the millennial kingdom, and ultimately the creation of the new heavens and earth—Jesus used the phrase in Acts 1:6-7 (READ)

- b. However, Paul uses a more specific phrase in the next verse which narrows the focus to a particular eschatological event: **“the day of the Lord.”**
    - 1) Nearly every time the phrase **“day of the Lord”** (and its related phrases like ‘that day’ and ‘day of Christ’) is used in the Bible it refers to a future time of judgment when God will pour out His wrath and judge the world
      - a) Isaiah 13:1-9 (READ)
      - b) Ezekiel 30:3: **“For the day is near, Even the day of the LORD is near; It will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.”**
      - c) Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah and Malachi all use it to describe a terrible time of God’s judgment that no man can endure
    - 2) The NT describes the day of the Lord beginning with the rapture of the church and continuing through a time of intense tribulation for the rest of the world, and culminating with the final return of Jesus and the establishment of His millennium kingdom
  - c. The reason the Thessalonians didn’t require any additional teaching on this subject was because they were apparently already fairly knowledgeable about it (1b): **“you have no need of anything to be written to you.”**
    - 1) Paul likely covered some aspects of eschatology (end times) during his initial three week stay in Thessalonica
    - 2) Timothy may have also spent some time instructing them on his visit
    - 3) Paul also addressed the topic in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (likely written prior to 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians)
    - 4) His purpose here appears to be not new information, but rather to encourage them to remain vigilant (more on that later)
2. However, Paul does reveals three important truths about Christ’s return and the day of the Lord:
- a. The first is that they are **CERTAIN** (2): **“For you yourselves know full well”** (2a):
    - 1) Paul emphasizes the certainty here by stressing the Thessalonians own knowledge of what is to take place: **“you yourselves know”** (person and number are already part of the verb in Greek so adding the pronoun “yourselves” adds emphasis)
    - 2) He also emphasizes the certainty of Christ’s coming in the verb “know”--Paul uses the perfect tense rather than the expected present tense—**“you know because you have come to know”**
    - 3) Finally, this emphasis on certainty is found in the phrase “full well”—which comes from a Greek word expressing completeness or accuracy
  - b. The second truth Paul reveals about the day of the Lord is that it will be **SUDDEN**--and he uses two illustrations to make his point (2b-3): **“For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.”**
    - 1) First illustration: It will come **“like a thief in the night”**:
      - a) Jesus uses the example of a thief to describe His return in Matthew 24:42-44 (READ)
      - b) So does Peter: 2 Peter 3:10 (READ)
      - c) It’s also used in Revelation 3:3 and 16:15

- d) What all of these passages have in common is the emphasis on not being aware of when the thief come and the sudden nature of his arrival (or in this case the return of Christ and the day of the Lord)
- Notice that Paul writes here that it will come at a time when people will think they are in a time of **“Peace and safety!”** (3a)
  - This may actually be a reference to world leaders—maybe religious leaders—claiming that they can bring peace and safety to a ever wicked world
  - Evidence for this comes from the OT where prior to God’s judgment upon Israel, the false prophets were prophesying peace and safety rather than warning the people of God’s coming judgment (Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11; Ezekiel 13:10)
- 2) Second illustration: It will come **“like labor pains upon a woman with child”**:
- a) This second illustration also emphasizes the sudden nature of the day of the Lord
  - b) A woman knows the labor pains are coming, and may know generally when they will start, but she doesn’t know the day and time
  - c) In this illustration we see both the certainty as well as the suddenness of the coming of the day of the Lord

Amy’s HELPP Syndrome and Kimberly’s early arrival

- c. The third and final truth Paul reveals here about the day of the Lord is that it will come with judgment and destruction (3): **“then destruction will come upon them...and they will not escape.”**
- 1) Notice that Paul says this destruction will come upon **“them”**
  - 2) Them refers to those who are saying **“peace and safety!”**—the wicked who have rejected God and His Son
  - 3) Something else we must understand is that the destruction Paul is referring to here is not just temporal (earthly) but spiritual and eternal:
    - a) 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 (READ)
    - b) The earthly destruction is chronicled in Revelation 6-19
    - c) The eternal judgement is described in Revelation 20:11-15
  - 4) The bad news is there is no escape for those who do not know the LORD

B. But, there is good news for those of us who know the LORD—we don’t have to worry about the day of the Lord (4-5; 9-11)

1. First, as Christians we know what’s coming (4-5): **“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness...”**
  - a. In Colossians 1:13 Paul writes that God has **“rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son...”**
  - b. Darkness is always associated with the domain of Satan and ignorance and foolishness, while light is always associated with the domain of God and wisdom and knowledge
  - c. Paul uses that same analogy here by reminding the Thessalonians—and us--that Christians are no longer in darkness but rather, **“sons of light and sons of day”**

- d. And as sons of light and sons of the day, we know what's coming because the future has been revealed to us—first by Jesus to His disciples and now to us through the Word of God
  - e. So, because we are no longer **“of the night nor of darkness”** the coming day of the Lord does not have to overtake us like a thief—it does not need to catch us off-guard
2. Second, as Christians we are destined for salvation not wrath (9): **“for God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.”**
- a. Back in chapter 1:10 of this letter Paul spoke of how the Thessalonians had turned to God and were waiting for Jesus to come down from heaven and rescue them from the wrath to come
  - b. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14: **“But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
  - c. Ephesians 1:2-8: **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us.”**

C. Conclusion: With our salvation, and with this knowledge, there is an expectation (6-8, 11):
--

- 1. Paul issues two imperatives or challenges in this passage:
  - a. We must remain committed to righteousness (6-8): **“so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.”**
    - 1) The charge to be alert and sober is a call to be prepared for the Lord's return and to be committed to righteous living
    - 2) Read Romans 13:11-14
    - 3) Read 2 Peter 3:11-18
  - b. We are to build one another up (11): **“Therefore, encourage one another and build up one another, just as you are also doing.”**