

I Thessalonians 5:1-11 The Coming of the Day of the Lord

Alright, this morning we are starting I Thessalonians chapter 5, the last chapter of the book. I Thessalonians chapter 5 is entitled The Testimony of Believers, that is, *believers* in general. Because remember in I Thessalonians 1 we had The Testimony of the Thessalonians. In chapter 2 we had The Testimony of Paul. In chapter 3 we had The Testimony of ~~Peter~~ Timothy. Then in chapter 4 the all-important chapter The Testimony of the Lord. Now we have The Testimony of Believers; how believers are to live, and function, and believe in these last days.

The Testimony of the Lord chapter 4, two things we studied. Verses 1 through 12 we studied, first of all, God's will for our life. God has a will for every believer, that is sanctification - the setting apart that happens when we receive the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit sets us apart from all other spirits.

But secondly, in verses 13 to 18 we have the coming of the Lord. They were concerned. They believed in the coming of the Lord. They believed that when the Lord comes, we are going to be with Him, but they were concerned about those who had died. In and amongst the church, these people were called "the people who fell asleep." This is not ever applied to anything in the Scripture except for the physical body. There is no such thing as *soul sleep*, it is physical.

And it is called *sleep* is for two reasons. Number one the body looks like it is sleeping, When the person has died, he looks like he is sleeping. And secondly, it is called sleep because it is temporary. It is temporary just like someone taking a nap or someone sleeping, and is about to wake up.

When we die according to II Corinthians chapter 5 verse 8, when we die our spirit separates from our body. The body dies. It is sleeping, for believers it is sleeping. Our spirit goes to be with Christ and the body goes in the grave. But we also know that after we are raised up when Christ comes at the coming of the Lord - we studied from I Corinthians chapter 15 that when those physical bodies are raised, they are going to be changed in the twinkling of an eye; in an instant from a physical body to a spiritual body. We are going to inhabit these spiritual bodies. So my spirit goes to be with Christ when I die, **To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord** (II Corinthians 5:8). But you will put my physical body in the ground, in the grave. But when Christ comes, at His coming, He is going to call the physical body up and He is going to change it into a spiritual body and then I will reside in that spiritual body from that time forward. We are going to inhabit the spiritual bodies that we are going to get.

Paul answered in verses 13 through 18 of chapter 4 the first question that the Thessalonians had as to how the Lord is going to come. How is He going to come? He is going to come with the voice of the archangel, the shout of the command by God, and the trumpet of God will sound, and those who are in the grave that believe in Jesus Christ will be raised up. That is how it is going to happen.

But in chapter 5 verses 1 through 11 is when the Lord is going to come. The timing of it all. When He is going to come, not how, but when He is going to come. Chapter 5 verses 1

through 11 deals with the topic of The Day of the Lord. In chapter 4 we studied The Coming of the Lord. Now we are studying the coming of The Day of the Lord. The term *day of the Lord* in the Bible is a term that is made in reference to when the wrath of God comes. That time when it is the Lord's Day.

The Day of the Lord is a phrase used nineteen times for judgment in the Old Testament. Four times in the New Testament. When we say *day, Day of the Lord*, we do not mean twenty-four hours. It is a time-period. We know from the book of Daniel chapter 9, as well as from the book of Revelation that it is a seven-year period of time, The Day of the Lord, when His judgment comes. When God's people are taken to meet the Lord in the air, that is when the Lord's Day starts. Because as we will see when we get into verse 9, we are removed, we have not been appointed for wrath, but we have been appointed for salvation. And the Lord's Day comes when the tribulation starts. The tribulation period starts and it culminates at the second coming of Christ - that is the Lord's Day. So we have the rapture that happened back in chapter 4 verses 13 through 18. Now we have the Day of the Lord which takes place right afterwards, which is after God's people are taken up. Then there is a seven-year period when the earth will experience the judgments of God.

We have two sections today. Verses 1 through 5, The Coming Day of the Lord. Basically, what he is saying is we do not have to worry about that. We are not going to be here for the judgment. The Coming Day of the Lord. In verses 1 to 5 the verb tenses are all present active indicative, which means it is fact. That is important to know as we are reading through here. Verses 1-5, present active indicative is an expression of fact. In verses 6 through 11 it is called the subjunctive mood. First person plural hortatory subjunctive, which is an encouragement and an exhortation. Not a command. There are no commands in here, and that's important.

Let's begin our reading in verse 1, **Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need for it to be written to you. For you yourselves know accurately that the day of the Lord in this way is coming as a thief in the night. For whenever they should say, "Peace and safety!" Then sudden destruction comes upon them, like the labor-pain to the one having a baby in the womb; and they should never escape.** *Concerning the times and the seasons*, that is a Hebraism.

He says, "I have no need to write to you." **But you yourselves know accurately** - this is one thing you have to know - **that the day of the Lord is coming as a thief in the night.** In a moment he is going to say, "It is coming as a thief in the night, but it will not overtake you." It will come upon people who are saying - verse 3, **For whenever they should say, "Peace and safety!" Then sudden destruction comes upon them.** Things are going to be carrying on as usual. People are going to be living life as Jesus said in another place, marrying and giving in marriage. Things are going to be happening in normal life but then all of a sudden, like a thief in the night, judgment is going to come. Whenever they say, "Peace and safety" suddenly it is ripe for judgment and everything seems fine and everything seems calm then boom, sudden destruction comes as he gives the example of the pregnant woman. Look at the end of verse 3, *like labor-pain for a pregnant woman.* So she is about ready to give birth, the Lord is about

ready to give birth with judgment. As soon as the labor pain comes, then it is birth - then comes the judgment of God.

Verses 4 and 5 are very important in the Bible. Three important verses for this whole section. He says, **But you yourselves, brothers, are not in darkness, in order that the Day should overtake you as a thief. You yourselves are all sons of light and sons of day; we are not of night, nor of darkness.** That is what I meant about present active indicative verbs. They are factual statements. It does not say *you should not be* of the darkness. It does not say, *you might not be* of the darkness. It does not say *you better shape up or else you are going to be part of the darkness and left behind.* **You are not in darkness in order that the day should overtake use a thief.** That is a factual statement.

What Paul is saying in verse 4 is that once you have received Christ you are of the day and you are of the light. Light and darkness has to do with knowing Christ or not knowing Christ. It is impossible for a Christian - listen to this, I am making the statement, I own it, I own up to it. It is impossible for a Christian: a born-again believer, one that has received the Spirit of Christ - it is impossible to be left behind and not be ready and that is his whole point. And I have heard this before because I have heard the illustration of, "You better be ready for the coming of the Lord because if you are a believer and you are not ready you could get left behind." It is impossible. What makes you ready is the fact that Christ is living inside of you, is that you have received Christ. Not believed in Him with your mind, but received His Spirit into your heart, into your spirit. That is what makes you ready when Christ comes so that that day will not take you unawares.

In Colossians chapter 1 verse 13 Paul said that **The Lord has delivered us from the power of darkness, and transformed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.** The moment that I received Christ I came out of spiritual darkness, and he says I was transferred into the kingdom of His Son. I am now a child of light, not darkness. Factual statement.

In Ephesians chapter 5 verse 8 Paul says that **You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord: walk as children of light.** So we are already light once we received Christ. So he makes a factual statement.

Again, verses 4 and 5. **You yourselves, brothers, are not in darkness,** that is a factual statement, **in order that the Day should overtake you as a thief. You yourselves are all sons of light** (factual statement) **and sons of day** (factual statement); **we are not of night,** (factual statement) **nor of darkness** (factual statement).

Verses 6 and 7, The Characteristics of Believers. This is where the verb tense changes to the subjunctive mood. It is called the *hortatory subjunctive*, which means *encouragement* or *exhortation*. **Therefore then, we should not sleep,** notice how we have translated it in order so that you would know when it is a subjunctive mood. **Therefore then, we should not sleep, as also the rest do; but we should watch and we should be sober. For the ones sleeping are sleeping by night; and the ones being drunk are drunk by night.** So the reason I read it and pointed out a literal translation is so that you do not take it as a command. It says, **We should not be sleeping as the rest.** In other words, if you know the Lord then you should not be

sleeping. You should not be in darkness. I should not be as a nonbeliever. I should be spiritually awake and alert to the fact that Christ is coming and His presence in my life makes me ready. **Therefore then we should not sleep.**

Interesting that the word *sleep* in Greek for this section is different than the one for *sleep* in verses 13 through 18 of chapter 4. The ones who have fallen asleep are said to have died. This is the normal sleep. Not the sleep associated with death.

Therefore then, we should not sleep, as also the rest do; but we should watch and we should be sober. Paul uses the same teaching in I Thessalonians chapter 5 as Matthew did, as far as the teaching of Jesus in Matthew chapter 26. He used the physical condition to be an illustration and an example to a spiritual truth. So if you have your Bibles want to follow along, I am going to read Matthew chapter 26 verses 36 to 46. Paul seems to have used the teaching of Matthew 26 for his presentation in I Thessalonians 5.

So Matthew 26 beginning at verse 36 - they are going up to Gethsemane. **When Jesus came with them, that is, with the disciples, they came to a place called Gethsemane, and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."** There is one of the words of Paul uses in I Thessalonians 5, *watch with me*, be alert, Stay alert. Verse 39, **He went a little further and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."** He was praying about His upcoming suffering and death, and He is asking the Father to remove that cup from Him if it be possible. **Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.**

Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, there is our **καθεύδω** (katheudō) that Paul uses in I Thessalonians chapter 5. He finds them sleeping, **and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?"** There is our word for *watch*. He is showing Peter in the flesh, that the flesh does not have what it takes to watch for one hour when it comes to spiritual things. **"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."** The literal translation there is *the spirit indeed is prepared, but the flesh is weak*. He is telling them that this battle is spiritual, not flesh.

Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. So He left them, and went again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to His disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."

Back to I Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 6 and 7. We learn that many times Satan attacks when our flesh is tired and weak, rundown. Usually, Satan has attacked us with many different ways to get us mentally tired and physically tired and emotionally drained - just some

of the trials that are just coming away, just awareness down to the point that we are mentally, emotionally, and are physically tired because the flesh is weak. And we get so discouraged, and so depressed, that we just want to give up. Satan waits for the flesh to be in a weakened condition and then he comes and then he tempts us or tries us in relation to the physical condition. It is a spiritual watching that both Jesus and Paul are talking about, not a physical watching. It is spiritual watching.

Back in Matthew 26, the disciples did not have the Holy Spirit. Their flesh could not perform.

In I Thessalonians chapter 5 Paul is saying, "You have God's Spirit. You are not of the night. You are not going to be overtaken as a thief in the night as it is for this nonbeliever." And now it says in verse 6 in I Thessalonians 5, **Therefore then, we should not sleep, as also the rest do, but we should watch and we should be sober.**

These same words are found in I Peter chapter 5 verse 8, where Peter says, **Be sober, and be watchful.** Do not let your mind be overcome by alcohol or psychological conditions of the world. It is both a word applied to the mental as well as to the physical realm. So Peter in I Peter chapter 5 verse 8 says, **Be sober, and be watchful; for your adversary the devil walks around as a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.** Waiting for someone to be caught up and not be ready and waiting for the Lord.

He says in verse 7, by reason, **For the ones sleeping are sleeping by night, and the ones being drunk are drunk by night.** He is describing normal nightlife. He says, "This is what nightlife people do. And spiritually speaking you are not in the nightlife that that day should overtake you as a thief in the night."

But verse 8 says, **But we ourselves being of day should be sober** - notice *should be*. It is not a command because we are, mentally, emotionally alert - **having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet the hope of salvation.** The word *alertness* or *awake* has to do with the condition of the heart. If you have Christ in your heart you are awake. And secondly, the word *sober* has to do with the mind, sober mindedness, no effects of alcohol or the thoughts of the world affecting the mind. But in verse 8 he says, **You become sober by having put on**, notice past time, **having put on the breastplate of faith, and the helmet of salvation.**

Paul in Ephesians 6:10-13 describes the various parts of the armor, which every part is Jesus Christ. He says, "Now if you apply Christ to every area of the life He is already there. If Satan is attacking your mind, you are already protected." So after you put on the breastplate of faith and love, and after you put on the helmet of salvation you are protected. So in Ephesians chapter 6 Paul says, "All you need to do is resist in the evil day and be able to stand."

Verse 9, **Because God has not appointed us to wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.** This is a very important verse, one of the most important verses in the Bible. **God has not appointed us to wrath**, (anger, judgment) **but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.** So we are not appointed for the judgment day, the seven-year tribulation period. **We are appointed to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus**

Christ. The One who has died on our behalf, in order that whether we should watch or we should sleep, we might live together with Him. On account of which, be encouraging one another. And notice this little translation. It gets a little choppy but this is the way it reads: **and the one be building up the one.** That is, *be ministering one on one.* Making an individual ministry between you by encouragement. **According as also you also are doing.**

In conclusion the flesh is weak. It is not prepared to handle a spiritual battle. We do not fight, we resist. That is how we win. We do not fight and defeat Satan, he has already been defeated. We resist him. The Holy Spirit in me is alert and ready for the coming of Christ. That is what makes me ready. We are to be sober. Sober in our thinking according to the salvation that is in Jesus Christ, and not to get off on a side trip.

So in chapter 4 verses 13 to 18 it answers the question of how the Lord is going to come. In chapter 5 verses 1 through 11 he talked about the broader perspective about the day of the Lord, when it is going to come. Unexpectedly. Suddenly. But only for those who do not know Christ. Those who know Christ were taken up when the Lord came in I Thessalonians chapter 4 verses 13 through 18.

So there are three verses that I want to mention to you again that are the major verses of our text. I Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 4 and 5. **But you yourselves, brothers, are not in darkness, in order that the Day should overtake you as a thief. You yourselves are sons of light and sons of the day; you are not of night, nor of darkness.** Factual statements. And then verse 9. **God has not appointed us to wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.** Many people believe that believers are going to go through the tribulation period. That is the period of judgment. God has not appointed us for judgment. He has appointed us to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ.

Also, there is a popular teaching around that says that you have to watch what you are doing. "You have to make sure you are ready for the coming of Christ, lest you be left behind." What makes me ready, what makes you ready is the fact that Jesus Christ lives inside. We have been born of the Spirit of God, that is what makes us ready. Not what we are doing at the time that He comes. Some people believe that if you are not all the time alert, all the time staying awake, and physically ready for the coming of the Lord, you will not go unless you are. And that is just not true. What makes you ready is you have Christ. And the judgment of God is not for believers, it is for those who have rejected Christ.

Well, we continue on with this last chapter next week. Let's close with prayer.