

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 13TH - 14TH, 2021 // BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS

**THE SEASON (1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-3)**

**"ABOUT THE TIMES..."**

Paul has alluded to the 2nd coming of Christ many times so far, but here he wants to talk about what that means for Christians vs. non-Christians. Christians know from Mt. 24:43 that Jesus will be coming like a "thief in the night."

- Though we will not know the exact date (Mt. 24:36) of His return, **we will have a sense of the season.**

**LIKE IN THE DAYS OF NOAH**

Similar to the false sense of security in Noah's day before the flood, people who are alive during Christ's return and the years that lead up to it will say "peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them."

- The finality the world and its systems are immanent, similar to birth when labor pains begin. It is coming, and **we should feel it.**

**SECURITY IN WHAT?**

The Bible tells us that the major systems of humanity will tell of a **false security**. This means societies will move away from a dependence on God to security and peace in **economics, gov't, and humanism.**

- Jesus said **all these things will pass away, but the only stability is in Him and His Word** (Mt. 24:35). **History proves this.**

**TRUE BELIEVERS WILL NOT BE SHOCKED**

Christians will not be caught off guard by Christ's return, but a world that isn't in step with God will be surprised and horrified.

- Do we not live in self-absorbed times? Are our lives not consumed with "eating, drinking," and just doing us? **Though the "thief's" coming should be felt, distractions and selfishness often cloud our reception.**

**WHAT DOES THE 2ND COMING MEAN?**

When Jesus returns there will be no escape from his judgment for people that have not lived a life in relationship with Him. Christians will not have to face God's judgment.

- The "**sudden destruction**" will not be a physical death, but **the collapse of worldly systems and the beginning of non-believers eternal separation from God.**

**OF THE LIGHT (1 THESSALONIANS 5:4-11)**

**"BUT YOU...ARE NOT IN THE DARK"**

The true Christian should not be surprised or fearful the 2nd coming of Christ. Because we are "not in the dark," we should anticipate His return and not be caught off guard.

- Darkness in the Bible typically refers to spiritual and moral blindness. **People who reject Jesus and His teachings are in the dark about what is good and evil.**

**CONTRASTING DARK AND LIGHT**

Paul makes it clear that Christians do not "belong to the night or darkness." This means we should be aware and not asleep to spiritual things like the world around us.

- **Falling asleep is a picture of what can happen to us spiritually that affects us ethically and morally if we aren't actively paying attention (pray, read, listen).**

**"STAY AWAKE AND BE SELF-CONTROLLED"**

Because we belong to the day, we are to live alert, sober, and self-controlled. When we live "in the night" it is easy and inevitable that we get sleepy (apathetic and selfish).

- This boils down to **intentionality and living in God's grace. We must choose to be in healthy places with godly people, and when we make mistakes we must repent.**

**SOME TOOLS TO HELP US**

Paul tells the Thessalonians to put on the "armor of **faith** and **love** and a helmet of the **hope** of salvation." Armor covers the heart and helmets cover the head.

- **God must protect our emotions (hearts) and thoughts (minds) from the evil around us. So, we must have a relationship with Christ in order to live properly.**

**NOT FOR WRATH, BUT SALVATION THROUGH JESUS**

Ch. 1 ends with a reference to Jesus saving us from God's "coming wrath." Many struggle with this teaching. God's wrath is the result of rebellion to His commands, but it will not be poured out on people that follow Jesus.

- **Evil must be held accountable because evil hurts people, and people are God's most loved creations.**

**WE HAVE TO LIVE IN OUR SALVATION**

Through Jesus we not only avoid the coming wrath of God, we live fulfilling and meaningful lives until His 2nd coming. As life gets more difficult, we must "encourage one another and build each other up."

- **We need God and each other so we can live in the freedom that Jesus grants us. Salvation is more than just heaven.**

**DIRECTION (1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-22)**

**BEHAVIOR TOWARDS CHURCH LEADERS**

Paul gives very straightforward instructions to the church body in how they're to treat church leadership.

He tells them to **respect those who work hard and sacrifice for the benefit of others, and be at peace with leadership.**

- We're to respect God appointed positions and live in harmony if possible. **Leaders must also live worthy of honor** (Tim and Titus).

**INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL CHRISTIANS**

V14-22 may be some of the most clear guidelines for Christian living in the NT.

- **"warn those who are idle":** We are to warn people that standing still spiritually will eventually lead to spiritual death.
- **"comfort the discouraged":** To pray for and help people that struggle with depression and hopelessness.
- **"help the weak":** We are to teach and model the Word to those that are spiritually weak.
- **"be patient with everyone":** This is where most struggle. We must meet people where they are and help them progress.
- **"no one repays evil with evil":** We're not to respond to opposition the way the world does. Show grace and love, even to enemies.
- **"pursue what is good for one another":** We often expect a return on what we give, or we refuse to give unless we've already received. This is not the way of Christ.
- **"Rejoice...pray constantly, give thanks":** We're to recognize our blessings, talk to Jesus daily and use a biblical filter, and we are to give thanks for all God has done.
- **"Don't stifle the Spirit":** We slow and stop the Spirit working in our lives when we live in sin or deny the transformative power of God.
- **"Don't despise prophecies, but test all things":** This can mean the negligence of the Bible and also the suppression of prophecy as a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12, 14). We are to also "test all things" by His Word.
- **"Hold onto what is good":** Goodness is defined by God through His Word. This means we hold on to the principles and teachings of the Bible.
- **"Stay away from every kind of evil":** We must be intentional in avoiding temptations and evil that will eventually hurt our relationship with God and others.

**BLESSINGS (1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-28)**

**THE "GOD OF PEACE" DOES THE HARD WORK**

Paul prays that "the God of peace...sanctify you completely." This means that **only by God's power, sparked by our submission, can we be saved and changed into people that honor God and can be used by Him.**

- Through Jesus we can be "kept sound and blameless at [His] coming." **A relationship with Jesus empowers us to live holy lives.**

**"HE WHO CALLS YOU IN FAITHFUL"**

God works in every part of our lives if we will allow Him to do so. If we will invite Jesus in, He will be faithful in helping in relationships, work, finances, emotions, and struggles.

- The caveat in experiencing the faithfulness of God is our willingness to relent and submit to His will and ways. **If we'll walk in humility, God will absolutely transform us.**

**READ THIS LETTER TO EVERYONE**

Paul concludes the 1st letter to the Thessalonians with a "charge...by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brothers and sisters." Paul also prays the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with" all of the Christians in Thessalonica.

- Paul had no other motive other than being obedient to God and the well-being of others when he sent this letter.

**AWAKE OR ASLEEP?**

- It is very easy to become spiritually apathetic and distant from God, especially today. **Have the distractions or temptations of the world lulled us into a spiritual sleep?**
- Only by prayer, the Word, and obedience to the Word can we be sober and awake. This means **being alert is synonymous with being intentional about how we live.**

**FEARFUL OR AT PEACE?**

- It is a matter of where we find our security. Is our sense of security in systems that the Word clearly says will come to an end? Or, **do we find peace and security in the immovable things of God?**
- A life built on the fragility of the world will be one of fear or dangerous negligence (false security).

**SIMPLE STANDARDS TO LIVE BY**

- We are only able to navigate this life and live in anticipation of the next if we have **faith in God and His Word.**
- The instructions of the Bible are not complicated, but they're hard to implement because we often lack discipline. This is why **we need God's grace, guidance, and power in our daily lives.**
- Warn the idle, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, and be patient with everyone.
- Don't repay evil with evil. - Pursue good things for others. - Pray constantly and give thanks.
- Don't stifle the Holy Spirit, but test all things with the Word.
- Hold on to what is good. Stay away from evil.