

# 1 Thessalonians

## I. Introduction

A. **1 Thessalonians 5:1-11** . . . Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. [2] For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. [3] While they (*the unbelievers and unprepared*) 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. [4] But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; [5] for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; [6] 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. [9] For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. [11] Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

## B. Pray

## II. Being alert, sober, the breastplate of faith and love, the helmet of salvation

A. **[5b]** We (*Christians*) are not of night nor of darkness; [6] **so then** let us not **sleep** as others do, but let us be **alert** and **sober**.

1. If you are a Christian, you are not only being transformed, you want to be transformed. And because you want to be transformed, you are doing what God asks you to do to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. This is why Paul says you are not of night nor of darkness.
2. Being in the light means we are being taught about God and His salvation through Jesus Christ. We are being taught that God's will is our sanctification. We are being taught how a Christian ought to live. We are being taught about the return of Christ. And we are being taught that when Christ returns He will gather God's people to Himself and judge the unbelievers, the unrepentant, and the unprepared.
3. However, being brought into the light is not the same as living according to the light. We can know the truth and still live contrary

to the truth. Therefore, because knowing is not equal to doing, here in vs 5-6, Paul gives us one warning and two exhortations about living in the light in relation to the return of Christ.

4. **One warning:** “Let us (*Christians*) not sleep as others do.” In other words, do not to become careless or negligent in living a godly life.
  - a. In talking about His return, Jesus gave this same warning in **Matthew 24:11-13**, “Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many (*Remember the false claims of peace and safety spoken of in vs 3?*). [12] Because lawlessness (*serving self/self-rule vs serving God/God-rule*) is increased, most people's love will grow cold (*Self-centeredness will surpass the importance of loving God, neighbor, and righteousness.*). [13] But the one who endures to the end (*perseveres in living a godly, God-pleasing life*), he will be saved.”
  - b. The reality is, faith in Jesus for salvation cannot be separated from living according to what Jesus says – any more than love for Jesus can be separated from keeping His commandments.
  - c. Therefore, let us not sleep or allow ourselves to get distracted by life, because a lack of alertness and preparation can have serious consequences for our eternal well-being.
5. **Two exhortations:**
  - a. **First exhortation:** “But let us be **alert**.” To be alert
    - (1) you have to be awake,
    - (2) you have to be watchful – which requires intentionally ignoring, resisting, or turning away from distractions,
    - (3) and you have to persevere in doing this to the end.
    - (4) In other words, live each day with the expectation that Jesus will return and with the desire to be found by Him living as a Christian ought to live. Or as we read in **2 Peter 3:14**, live in such a way as to be found by Jesus in peace, spotless and blameless.
  - b. **Second Exhortation:** “Let us be **sober**.” To be sober
    - (1) is to be serious minded, to think sensibly, and to live a self-controlled, biblically sound life as opposed to being controlled by your feelings, emotions, passions, irrational fears, spontaneous impulses, or excesses.
    - (2) Jesus made a similar statement in **Luke 21:34**, “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and

that day (*Christ's return*) will not come on you suddenly like a trap.”

- (3) This second exhortation is urging us to think sensibly and godly, because the way we think directly effects the way we live. Therefore, the wise Christian will evaluate his thoughts with such scriptures as **Philippians 4:8** to help him think sensibly and godly: “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell (*set your mind, focus your thinking*) on these things.”

B. [7] For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.

1. It is the darkness of unbelief, sin, and the ways of the world that lull the unbeliever to sleep, that is, to be careless and negligent about the Christ's return and the judgement to follow. In other words, the darkness makes them think there is no threat and therefore nothing to be concerned about.
2. And the darkness provides opportunities for unbelievers and unrepentant sinners to gratify their sinful desires, evil passions, and selfish wants – whether on their own or with companions.
3. And there is one more thing darkness does. It provides sinners a form of protection from getting caught by those who would judge them in this life for their sinful behavior.
4. Have you allowed the darkness to lull you to sleep in one or more areas of your life? Is there a sin you do behind closed doors or away from the eyes of those you want to hide your sin from? Is there anything in your life that loves the darkness for the protection or opportunities it offers? Such things dull our senses and diminish our preparedness for Christ's return.
5. Without question, our world is full of powerful temptations. The devil is relentless in his efforts to turn us against God and toward selfishness. And we have our own fears, wants, and sinful desires that tug at us. Therefore, we must remain alert and committed to being prepared if we are to stay awake and walk in the light – day by day. And I want to remind you that you do not do this alone. God empowers, enables, equips, and helps you so that you can live as He saved you and calls you to live.

- C. [8] But since we are of the day (*that is, since we live according to the light of God and His word*), let us be sober (*serious minded, self-controlled, alert and ready for Christ's return*), having put on the breastplate of **faith** and **love**, and as a helmet, the **hope** of salvation.
1. Before looking at this verse, I want to read a similar statement that adds a few more examples and applications to what Paul says here.
  2. **Romans 13:8-14**, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. [9] For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' [10] Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. [11] **DO THIS**, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. [12] The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. [13] Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. [14] But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."
  3. Returning to **1 Thessalonians 5:8**, I want to point out that Paul references **faith, love** and **hope** in the same order as **1:3**, where he said he constantly kept in mind their **work of faith** and **labor of love** and **steadfastness of hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ....
  4. Notice, the return of Christ is a major theme in **1 Thessalonians**, and so is love. An emphasis on love appears early in the first chapter and continues into the last chapter. And in between we see that Paul's ministry was motivated by love, the Thessalonian believers care for one another was motivated by love, God taught them and teaches us to love, and Paul urged them just as he urges us to excel still more in loving one another. Without question, love is to be a predominant theme in every Christian's life.
  5. Returning to the wording of **vs 8**, Paul says to be sober, and then he says to "put on the breastplate of **faith** and **love**, and as a helmet, the **hope** of salvation."
    - a. The exact connection between the exhortation to be sober and the breastplate and helmet is unclear.
    - b. In other words, we are not sure if Paul meant that (1) we ought to be sober or we can be sober **because** we have put on this

- breastplate and helmet (2) or if we are to be sober **and** we are to put on this breastplate and helmet.
- c. Adding to the challenge of which is meant is the fact that the two options have different meanings.
  - d. So, since a choice has to be made, I am going to treat vs 8 as if Paul meant we are to be sober **and** we are to put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.
6. Both the breastplate and the helmet are protective gear, and both are intended for battle.
- a. Paul clarifies the nature of the Christian's battle in **Ephesians 6:10-13**, "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. [11] Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes (*deceptive methods*) of the devil. [12] For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."
  - b. In this description of war, we are given four exhortations.
    - (1) **First**, find your strength for living a godly life in the Lord, and use His mighty strength to gain victory after victory.
    - (2) **Second**, put on **all** the armor that God makes available to you – because that is what will enable you to remain godly when the devil tries to tempt or deceive you.
    - (3) **Third**, remember that this war is not against other humans, though it may look that way. In reality, this war is against the devil, his co-workers, the powerful influences of evil in our world, and the deceptions and lies of religion.
    - (4) **Fourth**, we exhorted once again to put on **all** God's armor and use it to stand firm in godly living – until the end.
7. This brings us back to the breastplate of faith and love. The breastplate protects your vital organs – the ones you must have to continue living. You can live without a leg, but not without a heart.
- a. The breastplate of **faith** protects us by trusting the armor of God, the empowerment God, the word of God, and the wisdom of God **ENOUGH** to live accordingly. And just as a reminder, when you live by faith in this way, you are in the safest, most secure place possible.

- b. The breastplate of **love** is the outward manifestation of our faith in God, our allegiance to God, and our commitment to love those around us as we ought. Therefore love protects us by putting us on God's side so that He is not only on our side theologically, but in very practical and personally experienced ways as well.
  - (1) James helps us understand the difference between choosing God's side and living accordingly, and claiming to be on God's side while choosing to live as a friend of the world.
  - (2) We read this in **James 4:4-8**, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. [5] Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: 'He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us'? [6] But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, 'GOD is opposed to the proud, but **gives grace** to the humble.'"
  - (3) The point is that living according to godly love puts us in God's camp, aligns us with God's purposes, and makes us a member in good standing in God's army – which in turn puts us under the full and practical protection of God in the daily affairs of life.
- 8. Not only do we need to protect our vital organs, we need to protect our head. Why? Because our head is used to think, make choices, and direct our life.
  - a. Therefore, we need to protect godly ways of thinking and a right view and understanding of God himself.
  - b. We need to protect right beliefs and godly values, the biblical way of understanding and making sense of life, and a right view of relationships.
  - c. We need to protect the godly way of dealing with our human desires and fears, what to say and what not to say, and our attitudes.
- 9. The hope of salvation is a good protector for our head because when it is on we are convinced we will be with the Lord one day – and that conviction becomes a motivation to live a godly life in anticipation of that day.
  - a. Paul put this truth this way in **Colossians 3:1-4**, "If you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your

mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.  
[3] For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.  
[4] When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore . . . and Paul goes on to say that what he just said is reason enough to put away sin and live a godly life.

### III. Conclusion

- A. [9] For God has not destined us (*or appointed us*) for wrath (*the wrath of God that will be experienced at the return of Christ as He judges rebellious sinners who did not repent and live a life of faith and love*), but (*God appointed us*) for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. [11] Therefore encourage one another (*to live a godly life now in anticipation of Christ's return*) and build up one another (*help each other, instruct one another, and exhort each other to live a godly life now*), just as you also are doing.
- B. If your love for God is not at a place that it compels you to live a godly life now, then maybe you will find motivation in knowing that when Christ returns you will have to look Him in the eye and give an account of how you have lived. But if giving an account of how you lived is not enough motivation to live a godly life now, then maybe the fear of God's wrath against sin and unrepentant sinners will be enough.
- C. Regardless of where you are, or where you started in relation to the motivating reason to live a godly life, keep moving and growing toward living a godly life for the love of God and love of those around you.