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# The Thessalonian Letters

*Rescue Before Wrath*

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

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# End time events (5:1)

- **“the times and the epochs”** ~ “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:7). Paul focuses on the same end time events.
- **“time”** (*chronos* & *kairos*) ~ time as a sequence of moments (“chronology”) versus time as characterized by the kinds of events that occur within each period.
- Both are included to show the interval of time that must pass, as well as the nature of the events that will characterize the coming of the Lord.
- No need for **“anything to be written”** to the Thessalonians on this subject ~ because Paul had already taught them about end time events.

# The coming “Day of the Lord” (5:2)

- The Thessalonians already knew “**full well**” (*akribōs*) ~ their knowledge was accurate, precise, and thorough. Even though they could not know the exact time of its onset, the coming judgment on the ungodly is certain and inescapable.
- The “**day of the Lord**” ~ later he calls it the time of God’s “**wrath**” (5:9). This is the terrible period of future judgment that was prophesied many times in the Old Testament (e.g., Isa 13:9-11; Joel 2:1-2; Zeph 1:14-18).
- It will come “**just like a thief in the night**” ~ the perspective of the Christ-rejecting world at the time when the Day of the Lord begins (Matt 24:43; Luke 12:39).
  1. The exact time of the coming judgment is unknown.
  2. It will surprise those who are unconcerned and unprepared.

# Like labor pains upon a woman with child (5:3)

- **“they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’”** ~ as the end is about to come, people will express an arrogant self-sufficiency and false sense of security because they willfully disregard God’s warnings.
- **“destruction will come upon them suddenly”** ~ once the the Day of the Lord begins, those destructive events will take them by surprise since they are not expecting them.
- **“like labor pains upon a woman with child”** ~ once a pregnant woman’s labor begins, the birth will take place in short order. It is a painful and intense time that is inevitable and unavoidable.
- **“they will not escape”** ~ the Lord’s wrath is inescapable, whether people are aware of it or not at the time it begins.

# Contrasting “day” and “night” (5:4-5)

- **“you, brethren, are not in darkness”** ~ Paul will address believers in the rest of this chapter.
- The Day of the Lord will not **“overtake you like a thief”** ~ the future period of God’s judgment and wrath is appointed for the unbelieving world living in darkness.

*Church-age saints are not destined to experience  
the Day of the Lord.*

- Believers are **“all sons of light and sons of day”** ... **“not of night nor of darkness”** ~ pairs believers with light; unbelievers with darkness (John 3:19-21). Also Col 1:13 - “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”

# Exhorting believers not to slumber (5:6)

- “**so then**” ~ Paul shares his exhortation for the Thessalonian believers.
- Not the “sleep” of death (4:13) but normal, natural “**sleep**” (*katheudō*) ~ Paul focused on the fact that a person is unconscious while asleep. Those who are unconscious are not aware of what is happening around them and are unable to alertly react to their situation.
- Pictures a believer who is insensitive or indifferent to spiritual things. Believers in this condition are not “*of the night*” but they are behaving more like those in darkness than the “*sons of day*” which they are.
- “**let us be alert**” (*grēgoreuō*) ~ watchful, attentive, vigilant, and awake. “**sober**” (*nēphō*) ~ avoid intoxication; figuratively, be sober-minded.

# Do not behave like children of the night (5:7-8)

- Just as “**night**” is the time for sleep or drunkenness, indifference to God is the natural characteristic of unbelievers who are in spiritual darkness.
- But believers are not “**of the night**.” Believers who allow themselves to become spiritually dull, indifferent, or impaired are behaving more like those in darkness than those who belong to light.
- “**sons of day**” must do things that are appropriate for daylight hours, such as being sober-minded and spiritually alert. Their spiritual armor will help to protect them:
  - **Breastplate** ~ “**faith**” expressing itself through unselfish “**love**.”
  - **Helmet** ~ a mindset of anticipation for their “**salvation**,” deliverance, and rescue from the coming judgment of God on a Christ-rejecting world.

# “God has not destined us for wrath” (5:9)

- **“destined”** (*tithēmi*) ~ to put in place, appoint, ordain, or plan. The Greek preposition “*eis*” means “in or into” wrath. God’s eternal plan for church-age saints keeps them from having any part in the future period when judgment and wrath come upon the unbelieving world.
- **“obtaining”** (*peripoiēsis*) ~ setting aside something for safekeeping or protection, safety, and preservation.
- **“salvation”** (*sōtēria*) ~ deliverance or rescue, which in this context means deliverance from God’s future wrath during the Day of the Lord.

*Church-age believers who have placed their trust in Christ for salvation from sin are also destined to obtain salvation from wrath.*

# Salvation and Rescue through Jesus (5:10)

- “Our Lord Jesus Christ ... **who died for us**” ~ the sentence of God’s judgment was taken by Jesus, and the wrath of God was satisfied through His death on the cross. Those who trust Him gain this benefit.

***Christ's role as our Rescuer from wrath is directly tied to what He accomplished as our Redeemer from sin.***

- **“whether we are awake or asleep”** ~ these benefits are for every church-age saint, based on their faith alone ~ not their works.
- Some Christians are more spiritually awake and alert than others. Some are more sober-minded and productive than others. But if they have put their trust in Christ then they **“will live together with Him.”**

# Edify one another with these truths (5:11)

- “**encourage**” (*parakaleō*) one another with these truths. It is very reassuring to know that God has not destined church-age saints for wrath but for rescue.
- “**build up**” one another (*oikodomeō*) ~ edification. One of the primary functions of the leadership of the local church is the edification of believers through the Word of God (Eph 4:11-16).
- “**just as you also are doing**” ~ Paul encouraged them to continue encouraging and building up each other. His affirmation demonstrates his love and concern for their ongoing spiritual growth.