
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.