

1 Thessalonians

Chapter 5

Introduction:

1. This section of the book begins with the word "But" because Paul is separating in distinction this section from the previous section. 4:13-18
2. The former section dealt with the body of Christ and new revelation that had previously been a mystery (kept secret). This section will deal with prophetic truths that have been revealed for years.
3. This is why Paul says in verse 1, "...ye have no need that I write unto you." They should have been familiar with these truths if they had been studying their Bible. They were discussed in great detail by the prophets and by Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry.
4. Three very familiar prophetic phrases are used in the first two verses:
 - "Times and seasons"
 - "Day of the Lord"
 - "Thief in the night"
5. These phrases are not used when referring to the body of Christ, but are used in correlation with God's earthly people, Israel.
6. The former passage (4:15-18) deals with our glorious deliverance by means of a catching away, while the latter passage (5:1-9) deals with a Christ-rejecting world, groping in darkness, with sudden destruction overtaking them.
7. By contrasting the Day of the Lord with the Rapture, Paul emphasizes the distinction of the one from the other.

Verse 1

1. The phrase "times and seasons" is also used in **Acts 1:7**. The context has to do with the time period before and during Christ's coming to earth to restore the kingdom to Israel.
2. Notice Paul says, "...ye have no need that I write unto you." Paul did not need to go into a lengthy discussion of this topic for two reasons:
 - First, because "the times and seasons" concern Israel and their kingdom, not the church (the body of Christ).
 - Secondly, because Jesus had already given a lengthy discussion of this topic in Matthew 24. He gave them very definite signs and indicators as to when His coming would be, and the end of the world as we know it. He taught the twelve diligently about the "times and seasons."

Verse 2

1. Paul discusses the "Day of the Lord." What is the Day of the Lord? From the Scriptures, we see that it entails two key principles:
 - It involves a time of persecution, trouble, and chastisement for Israel and the entire earth.

- It culminates with the return of Jesus Christ to earth, to deliver a remnant of believing Jews and set up their glorious kingdom on earth with Christ ruling on the Davidic throne.
 - Scriptures to read: **Isaiah 2:11-4:6, 13:6-14:3; Jeremiah 30:7-11; Zephaniah 1:7-18; Joel 1:15-3:21**
2. There are two things to point out about the Day of the Lord in verse 2:
 - The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night (we will discuss this in the next verse).
 - The Thessalonians knew perfectly (exactly) about this day.
 - The day of the Lord has been the subject of prophecy for years, whereas the Rapture of the church was something new. It was a mystery revealed through Paul. The Thessalonians were ignorant concerning it. 4:13

Verse 3

1. In describing the Day of the Lord, Paul uses the analogy of a "*thief in the night.*" Why is this? Verse 3 explains the meaning of this phrase. It is used to depict unexpectedness.
 - The word "sudden" means "unexpected."
2. When Israel thinks that they have secured peace and safety (by virtue of a peace covenant engineered by the anti-Christ), destruction will come upon them as travail upon a woman with child.
 - This word "travail" means "a writhing in pain."
3. Over and over again, the Old Testament prophets used the illustration of a woman travailing with child to illustrate Israel's chastisement in the last days and their rebirth as a nation. Isaiah 66 is an illustration of this:
 - Israel's rebellion - vs. 1-6
 - Israel brings forth a man-child (Jesus) before her time of travail - vs. 7
 - Israel will have a time of travailing, but God will cause her to bring forth many children (a believing remnant), and there will be peace and rejoicing (vs. 8-16). This is Israel's kingdom established.
4. When Paul speaks of the Day of the Lord, he not only includes Christ's Second Coming (the rebirth of Israel), but also Israel's time of travail before her rebirth (Daniel's 70th Week).
5. The word "*day*" does not always refer to a literal 24-hour period. You must look into the context to see what it is referring to. Sometimes the phrase "*day of*" refers to a time period.
 - For example, in **Jeremiah 30:7**, he says about Israel's travailing, "*...for that day is great...*" But then the next phrase says, "*...it is even the **time** of Jacob's trouble...*"
 - In **2 Corinthians 6:2**, Paul says that "*...now is the day of salvation...*" It is obvious that he doesn't mean that only that 24-hour period is the day in which people can be saved. He is referring to the time period of grace that we live in today.
 - In **Hebrews 3:8**, the writer mentions Israel's "*day of temptation in the wilderness.*" In the next verse, he identifies this day as lasting 40 years. "*Day of*" clearly refers to a time period in which Israel was tried.

6. The Day of the Lord is the **time** in which the Lord Jesus Christ takes control and begins to unleash the judgments contained in the seven-sealed book of Revelation 5.
7. Israel will seek for peace and safety in the wrong place. They fully rejected their Messiah and hope (Jesus Christ), and will turn to the man of sin, the anti-Christ.
8. This apparent peace will turn into sudden destruction because the Lord will begin to unleash chastisement upon Israel and the earth. This is the **Lord's Day**.
9. This means a time of travail for Israel and they will not escape it. The Lord's Day will last for seven years, culminating with His return to earth.
 - The first 3 1/2 years will be lighter birth pains (beginning of sorrows).
Matthew 24:8
 - The last 3 1/2 years, the birth pains will intensify (great tribulation).
Matthew 24:21

Verses 4-5

1. Let's review what we have learned thus far about these things to come:
 - As members of the body of Christ living in this day of grace, we are waiting to be caught up in the air with Jesus Christ. 4:13-18
 - After we are gone, there will be a temporary peace, but then sudden destruction will come upon "*them*" (Israel and the nations). Israel will begin travailing (having birth pains). These birth pains will last for seven years, with the pains intensifying.
 - After seven years of birth pains, Israel will finally be delivered by Christ and give birth to many children, receiving their kingdom on earth. Paul calls this time of travail "*the day of the Lord.*" Paul declares, "*they shall not escape.*"
2. But then verse 4 begins, "*But ye, brethren...*" Israel and the nations of the earth shall not escape, but we (the church) will. How? By means of the Rapture. 4:13-18
3. Paul says that we are not in darkness that the Day of the Lord should overtake us as a thief. Christ (Who is our light) will deliver us from this time of darkness.
 - The word "overtake" means "to take eagerly, to seize, to possess."
4. Paul clearly gives the identity of a believer living in the time of grace in verse 5. We are children of light and children of the day. cf. **Ephesians 5:8**
5. When the Rapture takes place, it will end this present day of grace and usher in a time of darkness like this world has never witnessed. But Paul says that we are "*not in darkness,*" "*we are not of the night, nor of darkness.*"

Verse 6

1. Based on our identity in Christ as children of light, Paul exhorts them, "*Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.*"
2. Paul basically says, "Don't let this world system lull you to sleep. Jesus is coming back for His body and we don't know when."
3. If we were to go through the Day of the Lord, some might say, "I'll wait until I see that I am in the Day of the Lord, and then I will get right with God and live unto Him."
4. This kind of thinking won't work because Christ could come for His body at any moment. We must watch and be sober, looking for that blessed hope. **Titus 2:13**

- "Watch" simply means to be alert. When a person is asleep, they are incoherent, but a person who is watchful is alert and vigilant. What do we sometimes call a night-time security guard? We call him a night watchman.
- "Sober" means that you are able to think clearly and you are prepared and ready. Too many Christians are intoxicated by this world system and they aren't prepared for the return of Christ. The devil has them drunk of the world's pleasures and possessions.

Verses 7-8

1. We see in verse 7 that sleeping and sin are things that predominantly take place at night in the darkness.
2. But this should not characterize Christians. Instead of sleeping and sinning, we should be watching and praying. Why? We are of the day. vs. 8
3. Satan is said to be the ruler of the darkness of this world. **Ephesians 6:12**
4. As Christians, we are not of the night, nor the darkness.
 - We have been turned from darkness to light. **Acts 26:18**
 - We have been delivered from the power of darkness. **Colossians 1:13**
 - Therefore, we are to cast off the works of darkness. **Romans 13:12**
 - And we are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. **Ephesians 5:11**
5. The seven years known as Daniel's 70th week or the Day of the Lord will be the darkest time period this world has ever known. The Old Testament prophets associated **darkness** with this time period just as Paul does. **Isaiah 5:30, 60:2; Joel 2:2; Amos 5:18, 20**
6. But as believers, we are children of the day. So what are we to do?
 - *"Be sober"* - as we said earlier, this means that we are able to look at this corrupt world system and think clearly about it.
 - *"Putting on the breastplate of faith and love"* - This protects our hearts.
7. What does the helmet do? It protects our mind. Our helmet is the *"hope of salvation."*
 - "Salvation" simply means "deliverance."
8. In context, what are we being delivered from? It is deliverance from the time of wrath, the Day of the Lord. Verse 9 brings clarity to this. This is our blessed hope. It could happen at any moment, so we must stay alert and ready and we must walk by faith in God's Word with a genuine love in our hearts for God.

Verse 9

1. When it comes to the dreadful and terrible Day of the Lord, we (the body of Christ) have the hope of salvation according to verse 8.
 - The word "salvation" simply means "rescue or safety."
2. Why do we have the hope of rescue and deliverance? Because God has not appointed **us** to wrath.
3. This Satanic world system, the nations of the earth, Israel, have all been appointed to receive the wrath of God during the Day of the Lord.
4. But we are **in Christ**, and therefore, we are trophies of His grace. We have been made one with Jesus Christ; therefore for God to pour out His wrath on us, He

would have to pour it out on His own Son. That can't happen. It happened once on the cross, but never again.

5. We have been appointed to obtain salvation (rescue, deliverance) before the time of wrath and destruction.
6. By what means will we will be delivered from this wrath? "*By our Lord Jesus Christ.*" cf. 1:10
 - Just as Enoch was raptured out **before** the time of wrath during the worldwide flood, we will be delivered from the wrath to come.

Verse 10

1. Our deliverance from the wrath of God is all based on one fact - Christ died for us.
2. Jesus Christ took the wrath of God for us on the cross so that we would not have to endure it. He took the payment that we deserve to pay for our sin debt.
 - The moment we trusted Christ, His death became ours, and His righteousness was imputed to us.
3. Because of this, Paul says "*whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*"
 - In other words, whether we are alive or dead, our destiny is to live with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what he said in 4:16-17.
4. Some will be alive when Christ returns to deliver us from the wrath to come; some will have died in Christ previously.
5. But the entire body of Christ will live **together** with Christ. I love this!
 - It didn't just say that we would live **with** Christ. You can live and abide in the same location as somebody, but be detached from them and not do anything together.
 - Paul says that we will live **together** with Christ. We are joint heirs with Christ. We will enjoy a living, active, vibrant relationship with Christ in the ages to come.

Verse 11

1. Paul will now move away from the subject of prophecy and will begin a very practical section of this book with everyday commands for believers. There are 22 commands in all.
2. It is important to realize that we do not live under the Old Testament Law system anymore. We have been delivered from that through Christ's finished work. But there are still church age commands given to us through the apostle Paul. cf. 4:2; **1 Corinthians 14:37**
 - The study of prophecy is fine, but if we know and understand the prophetic program and do not live the Christian life, what have we really accomplished? People can get out of balance.
 - The Bible says that we are to be growing in grace and knowledge. Many people **know** a lot about the Bible, but they aren't very proficient at showing grace to others in their daily walk. They are abrupt, impatient, terse, bitter, sarcastic, rude, obnoxious, etc. They may have a degree of knowledge, but they lack grace. This is a problem.

3. In this verse, Paul gives two commandments that concern our relationship with others:
 - *"Comfort yourselves together."*
 - *"Edify one another."*
4. "Comfort" simply means "to encourage, to console."
 - There are so many people who are desperately looking for someone to comfort them, but there is nobody. **Psalm 69:20**
 - Verse 14 says to *"comfort the feebleminded."* This simply means those who are faint in heart.
 - Visiting the hospitals, sending a card to the sick or those in bereavement, taking a meal to somebody's house who is going through a trial, praying with somebody who is struggling - Paul says, *"Comfort yourselves together."*
5. The word *"edify"* simply means to "build up." It carries the idea of being a house-builder.
 - Have you ever met somebody who is always tearing down other people? Edify is the opposite of this. When you edify, you are building up those around you.
 - Our tongue is a very powerful instrument. It has the ability to tear down or build up. Proverbs warns that *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue."* **Proverbs 18:21; cf. Ephesians 4:29**
6. Notice he didn't say to comfort and edify **yourself**, but one another. This is a call against the trap of self-centeredness.
 - We can spend too much time thinking about ourselves and our problems, sicknesses, afflictions, and trials. This is a recipe for depression.
 - Do you want a recipe for joy, fulfillment, and peace? **Romans 15:1-2**

Verses 12-13

1. These verses are dealing with leadership in the local assembly.
2. Paul had started this church in Acts 17. It was still a very young church, yet there were already established leaders in place. Spiritual leadership in the church is very important and Paul knew this. God is a God of order and structure. **Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5**
3. What were the responsibilities of these leaders? Paul mentions three key principles:
 - They were to labor spiritually among the flock. cf. **1 Timothy 5:17**
 - Jesus said to pray for laborers that would enter into God's harvest fields.
 - These laborers are people who have committed their lives, not to harvesting money or possessions or fame or worldly power, but the souls of men and women.
 - They were to oversee the local assembly of believers. cf. **Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2**
 - They were to admonish those in the church. cf. **2 Timothy 2:24-26, 4:2**
 - "Admonish" means "to put in mind, to caution, to reprove gently."
 - God places spiritual leaders in our lives to teach us God's Word, caution us of the dangers of straying from God's Word, and keep us spiritually accountable.
 - Example of admonishment: **Acts 18:24-28**