

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**

4. We see the responsibilities of spiritual leaders, but what is to be the response of the church towards their spiritual leaders?
 - First, know them. vs. 12
 - This simply means that the people in the church are to recognize their position of spiritual authority. cf. **Hebrews 13:7**
 - Second, esteem them very highly. vs. 13; cf. **Hebrews 13:17**
 - This simply means that you give them a high degree of respect.
 - Third, love them. vs. 13; cf. **Galatians 5:14-15**
 - The respect comes from a love in your heart. You truly love in Christ those who are carrying the weight and responsibility of the local assembly.
5. What is the result when the leaders and the people understand and fulfill their responsibilities? Look at the end of verse 13 - Peace!
 - In any organization, when leaders are full of self-will and the people are full of disrespect towards authority, it is a recipe for contention, chaos, and confusion.
6. Two more important thoughts on this subject:
 - When Paul refers to those who are "over you," he does not infer that they are more important to God or that they have special access to God. We all stand before God equal in the body of Christ. But it does denote spiritual authority in the local church on earth. "Over you" refers to leadership, not worth or value.
 - When a people no longer respect the spiritual leadership in their local church, they must seek to resolve the problem. If they cannot resolve it, they must leave that local assembly. They will be a constant source of hindrance to that church and they themselves will cease to grow spiritually if they do not respect and love the spiritual leaders in that church.

Verse 14

1. Paul continues in this verse to exhort the brethren in this local church with very practical instruction.
2. Any time you have people, you have problems that must be addressed and worked through. It is inevitable. The local church is no different. You have various people from different backgrounds, different stages of life, different opinions, different tastes, etc.
3. In this verse, Paul is giving various commands concerning people problems.

First, warn them that are unruly.

 - "Unruly" carries the idea of insubordinate. They refuse to submit to spiritual authority. They have a contentious spirit. Yes, every local church has people like this. There is a difference between constructive remarks and being unruly.
 - Paul says that it is the responsibility of the other brethren to get the contentious brother aside and warn or caution him of the consequences of his conduct on himself and upon the local church, and upon the cause of Christ as a whole.
 - The other brethren are to encourage peace in the situation - not just sit and listen quietly or fuel the fire. They are to warn the unruly brother.

Second, comfort the feeble-minded.

 - This isn't talking about people who are crazy. This is referring to people who are weary, weak, tired, and about to faint. This could be physical or spiritual weariness. Because of the word "feeble-minded," I am prone to think that Paul

was dealing more with emotional and mental discouragement. It is easy to get discouraged in your mind.

- "Comfort" means to encourage and console them (write a note, do something nice for them, give them a phone call, etc.).

Third, support the weak.

- This carries the idea of caring for a person who is simply unable to care for himself. He does not have any strength or ability to care for himself.
- The local church is a body and when one member is disabled (for whatever reason) the other members of the body kick in and care for it.

Fourth, be patient toward all men.

- As we said earlier, the local church is comprised of people, and people have problems and issues and struggles. We desperately need patience.
- The word "patient" means "to be long-spirited, forbearing (means 'to put up with')."
- There are two groups of people that Paul has addressed and, as a member of the body of Christ, you need patience with both.
 - There are some who are stronger than you in the Lord (your spiritual leaders). Yet they are human and will make mistakes. You must be patient with them.
 - There are some who are weaker than you in the Lord. Many times they can be physically and mentally draining to you, and you need patience as you minister to them.
- Patience is something that doesn't come naturally or easily. It is a fruit that comes from the Holy Spirit within. You must yield to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to produce the fruit of patience in your life.
- This is such a need in homes and in churches today. Many times we can be quick-tempered with our wives and children. We can be very high in our expectations and demands of those at church, harsh in our resentments, hard in our impositions, and quick to fly off the handle.
- We are in desperate need of the Holy Spirit to temper us and teach us long-suffering and patience towards all men.
- Many times we are like the man in **Matthew 18:23-30**. We want the Lord to be patient with us, but we show little patience with others. Ask yourself, "What if God dealt with me the way I deal with others?" Would you be in trouble?
- Praise His name, He doesn't. **Psalm 86:15**

Verse 15

1. The next command is to not render evil for evil. What does this mean? It simply means that a Christian is never to seek personal revenge for wrongs suffered.
 - This is not referring to criminal matters when another person is breaking the laws of society. If somebody is breaking into your house, you have every right to call the police and protect yourself and your family.
2. There is never an excuse for a Christian to return evil for evil. What **should** be the Christian's response? **Romans 12:19-21** is a key passage on this subject.

- Christians do not have to seek revenge because they know that there is a coming Day of Judgment in which every person will have to go through the fire of God's judgment. They can leave it with the Lord.
 - As Christians, we can do exactly what our Savior did. **1 Peter 2:22-23**
 - When a Christian returns evil with good, it heaps coals of fire on the head of the evil person. Paul is quoting **Proverbs 25:21-22**. In the Bible, God's judgment is pictured as fire. **Psalms 18:8** pictures the Day of Judgment and says that fire goes out of God's mouth and coals are kindled by it.
 - When you return evil with good, you are figuratively putting coals of fire on that person's head that will be set on fire by God's judgment. The hope is that this will cause the person to fear and turn to God in repentance and get it right.
3. In your life, you can choose to live by one of three principles:
 - The **satanic** principle: Do evil to those who do you good. In other words, "Get them before they get you."
 - The **soulish** principle: Do good to those who do you good and do evil to those who do you evil. Even lost people can do this. **Luke 6:32-33**
 - The **spiritual** principle: Do good to those who do you evil. cf. **1 Corinthians 6:7**
 4. The opposite of revenge is forgiveness. They say revenge is sweet, but forgiveness is much sweeter. A Christian has the ability to face the cross, and say, "God, because of all the forgiveness you have provided for me in Christ, I can forgive this offence."
 5. You may have heard the expression, "He is a "do-gooder." Paul teaches that a Christian is to be a "do-gooder." But not just among other believers; we are also to be doing good to those outside our spiritual family. cf. 3:12

Verse 16

1. This is one of the shortest verses in the Bible: "*Rejoice evermore.*"
 - The word "rejoice" means "to be cheerful, calmly happy."
 - The word "evermore" means "at all times."
2. Is this really possible? Is a Christian never to cry or feel emotions of sorrow and pain? Of course not. Jesus Himself wept and felt pain and anguish.
3. But a Christian is very unique in that he can be sorrowful, but also rejoicing at the same time. **2 Corinthians 6:9-10**
4. In **1 Peter 1:5-8** we see an example of this as Peter writes to the persecuted and scattered Jewish flock of believers.
 - Though their circumstances at the time consisted of manifold temptations and trials, they were able to rejoice at the blessings they had through Christ and the glorious prospect of His return and their life with Him.
5. Have you ever experienced this? Your flesh was sorrowful, but your spirit was rejoicing. Only a Christian can truly understand this (1:6). cf. **2 Corinthians 7:4; Colossians 1:24**
6. This comes from two things:
 - A knowledge of all the spiritual blessings you possess in Christ.
 - A strong faith, trust, and confidence that our suffering will turn to eventual glory in eternity. **Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

Verse 17

1. This is a very simple and easy to understand command: "*Pray without ceasing.*"
2. Even though the words are somewhat easy to understand, there can be some potential misunderstandings about this verse.
 - It does not mean that all the Christian should do is pray and nothing else. This would be an imbalance.
 - It does not mean that we have to be on our knees in prayer twenty-four hours a day. This would be impossible.
3. So, what does this verse mean in a practical sense?
 - It means that a Christian should stay in an attitude of prayer all the time.
 - It means that the Christian has a conscious awareness of his need of Christ all throughout his day.
 - It means that the Christian prays and depends on Christ before attempting to do anything.
 - It means that we should keep praying faithfully until the day when our prayers turn to absolute praise in the presence of our Savior in heaven.
4. Prayer is the joy and privilege of every believer in Christ. We have total access to God through the finished work of Christ. **Ephesians 2:18, 3:12; Hebrews 4:15-16, 10:19-22**
5. It is no accident that the commands to "*Rejoice evermore*" and "*Pray without ceasing*" are back to back in this passage. I sincerely believe that we would rejoice more if we prayed more. As we commune with the Lord, it transforms us into a different person.
 - **Illustration:** Remember when Moses came off the mountain after communing with the Lord? Remember how his face shone? We have God's very Spirit inside of us that will shine for God's glory as we commune with Him.
2 Corinthians 3:17-18