

Thessalonians 5

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[0 : 00] I'm going to read the section again, really from verse 7, or primarily from verse 8 on, but verse 7. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation, and so on.

Now, as we remember, Paul had been dealing and has been dealing in this section with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he's highlighting a great difference in the attitude of both the believer and the unbeliever. That with regard to the return of Jesus, the believer and the unbeliever have a completely different attitude.

Now, the one thing that we do know is that the return of Jesus is going to be totally unexpected. We do not know when he will return.

[1 : 02] He could return today, and if you say, oh, it won't be today, remember, it will be at such a time as that. At such a time as you think not, the Son of Man will return.

That's what Jesus said. The very time that you think he won't come is the very time he will come. And we're told to be watching and to be ready. And he's going to come while everything is going on just as normal.

And Jesus tells us that it's a secret that even the angels in heaven do not know the day when the Son of Man will return. But Paul is showing that the world will be caught unaware.

And particularly, the unbeliever will be caught unaware. Because the unbeliever is going to be saying there is peace and safety. As we were looking at that before in verse 3, while people are saying there is peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them.

And if people are insensitive to God's dealings, and if people close their minds to God's providence and shut out God's word, then an awful deadness and dullness comes over people's lives.

[2 : 19] So that spiritually there is this complete deadness. And people are just not aware. And I'm afraid an awful lot of people today in our own society live like that.

They have pushed God out. They don't think about God. And oppression doesn't have to be atheistic or even to be an agnostic not to be thinking about God.

There are many people, I believe, who, if you ask them, do you believe in God, would say, yes, I do. But they do not think about God. They may believe in the existence of God, but they don't think about God.

And there is a spiritual lethargy, a spiritual complacency, indeed a spiritual deadness about them. And it's a very, very dangerous condition to be in.

And these are the people who are saying there's peace and security. Everything is fine. And then all of a sudden, the return of Jesus. But we're not to just, I will move on from this, because we've highlighted this before.

[3 : 23] It's not just the unbelieving world that has to sit up and take notice. The believing world has to as well. Because Jesus warns his own people not to be found slumbering and sleeping when he returns.

And there are many instances of that warning in Scripture. And we read here, of course, that the Christian is somebody who should be alert.

So, verse 6, So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night. And those who get drunk are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, that is to the light.

We have light. And the only light that we have, it's not light of ourselves. It's not our own light. We can never turn around to somebody and say, You know, I'm better than you because I have light.

The only light that we have is the light that has been given to us by the Lord. Because, you see, when Jesus comes into a person's heart, into a person's life, light is brought.

[4 : 29] We see things differently. We see things. We're given a spiritual perspective, a spiritual understanding. You see things in a way you never saw them before.

That's what happens when a person, when God begins to work in a person's heart, in a person's life. They're beginning to see things and understand things.

And maybe some of you can remember that, or maybe some of you are going through that very experience just now, where the word is becoming more interesting. The Bible is taking a meaning that it didn't have before.

You're understanding truths that before you just couldn't grasp or lay hold upon. And you're saying to yourself, You know, the Bible is so much clearer to me than it used to be.

I don't know. I must be getting cleverer. But it's no, it's nothing to do with that. This is the light, the illumination of God's Spirit, opening your mind, opening your heart to understand spiritual gospel truths.

[5 : 32] And that's what we are to seek that we will have and that we will find. And Jesus, who says, I am the light of the world, also says to his people, You also are the light of the world.

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. But then Jesus goes on, Paul, I should say, goes on to say, But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

So we see that there are two parts to the armor that is spoken of here. Part that covers the head and part that covers the chest. In other words, the mind and the heart.

These are the two things. And this breastplate, there's two graces, faith and love. And these two graces always have to go together.

Because you see, faith without love is dead. It's a dead opinion. You see, a person can say, I've got faith, I believe in God.

[6 : 46] But it's not a faith that is worked by love. A faith that believes that God is, is not saving faith.

Because even the devils have that kind of faith. We're told that in James. That the devils believe and tremble. They believe in God and tremble.

The devils believe in the reality of God. They know the reality of God. And they tremble at the reality of God. But it's a dead faith that they have.

It's simply the belief that he is. Now people, that isn't the faith that we need. The faith that works by love is the faith that is essential.

Because as we say, faith without love is dead. It's just a dead opinion. And love to God cannot, real love to God cannot be without faith.

[7 : 47] Because faith, we're told in the Bible, works by love. So you can't separate them. If you say to anyone, I have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have faith in God and Jesus Christ. It's a faith that operates by love. If you say, I love the Lord, you love the Lord because you have faith.

The two are bound together. And that faith and love is manifested. It's worked out in our life. You know, sometimes people say, I don't know if I love the Lord.

I want to. I would say if the believer is more likely to lament their lack of love to the Lord than anything else.

And I'm sure most Christians here today will say, I wish I could love the Lord more. And as you look around the church, you probably think that loads of other people here, that they are able to love the Lord Jesus Christ far more than you can.

[8 : 55] And sometimes it's very difficult to give examples or to quantify the amount of love that we have. But I think that that love becomes evidenced in our love to the things that belong to the Lord.

You're here today because you love God's house. Why do you come to God's house? You come to worship the Lord. There is something in your heart that has drawn you here.

That is an evidence of our love. You love his word. You love his day. You love his people. You love his cause. You love all the things that we associate with the Lord.

And this is evidence of the love that is there within your own heart. And why do you love him? You love him because he first loved you.

So this breastplate that we have is one of love and of faith. Apparently the Roman armory, the breastplate that they had, it was a very hard part of this armory or uniform that they wore.

[10:07] But underneath there was a soft inner lining to keep them warm. And in a sense that's almost how it is with ourselves. There is, on the outside, there is the shining display of faith.

But there is love that is within, that warms the heart. So there's the faith and the love. And then we're told, but since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

Now that word, the hope of salvation, doesn't mean that we hope that one day we will be saved.

There might be somebody or there might be people in here today who would say to themselves, you know, I've never come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but I hope one day to be saved.

And that's good that you're thinking that. But don't leave it there. If that's what you're thinking, push on until you are saved. That's not what it's speaking here about the hope of salvation.

This hope of salvation is what the believer already has. And this salvation governs our past, it governs our present, and it governs our future.

[11:26] So that today, as a believer, when you talk about the helmet of the hope of salvation, you're looking back to the point where you were justified, where you were made right before God, where God worked in your heart, where you came to believe in him.

And you say to yourself, and you're able to say, well, I know, I know in whom I have believed. I might not be the best Christian going.

I might have all my faults and my feelings, but I know in whom I have believed. I know that I was in darkness, and I know that I've been brought into light.

I know that in my heart, there is this desire that won't give up, that wants to follow Jesus, because I have been saved. See, that's part of this salvation that is spoken of here.

And because we have been saved, we go on being saved. There is a present aspect to our salvation in what we would term our sanctification, where, as we said earlier on, where we are being changed, being conformed to the image of Christ.

[12:43] It's an ongoing work, chipping away, breaking us bit by bit by bit. But there's also a future aspect to our salvation, and that is our glorification.

And there's two aspects to that. There is, first of all, where our souls will be taken from this world, separated from our body, and conformed fully to the image of Christ, and we will be with them there.

And our bodies will be put into the grave till the resurrection. But part of the salvation involves our body as well. Because the fullness of the salvation that is in Jesus Christ governs every aspect of our being.

It governs our bodies as well. And that will be the fullness of that salvation when we will be body and soul united together in the presence of Christ forever.

That's the hope of salvation. Could you ever think of a greater hope than that? People say, I've got great hopes in this world.

[13:56] Well, there is no hope like that. Can you honestly think of anything greater? That everything in your past is covered and sealed and dealt with by Jesus.

That today you are as safe as any person in this world. Yes, you might come to harm physically, but spiritually, your soul is safe. It's as safe today as it will ever be.

And also the future that you have forever and ever reigning as kings and priests in glory forever.

The world, we're told, has no hope.

And a hopeless person is in an awful condition. That's what it tells us in Ephesians. For those outside Christ that they are without God and without hope in this world. If you're without God, you're without hope.

One equals the other. To be without God is without hope. Sometimes we might, just like Asaph the psalmist, envy or look at the prosperity and look at people who are really getting on in life and everything is going so well for them.

[15:09] And there might be times when you're going through difficult times and you look at them and you say, look at these people. They don't have a care or a concern in the world. Everything is going on so well and they have no interest in God.

And sometimes you might even envy them. But the word says, don't envy them. Because they ultimately, they have no hope because they're without God. They're to be pitied.

And what we should do is pray for them that they will come to know the Lord as their own Lord and Savior. And so, Paul goes on to say, for God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a destiny. People talk about their destiny. Well, this is a destiny God has for you. You are destined for salvation.

Destined not for wrath. Why? Because Jesus took the wrath that you deserve, that I deserve upon himself.

[16:15] That's what happened on the cross. In the darkness, on Golgotha, when Jesus is crying out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

He is, as it were, swallowing the wrath of God that was meant for us. So that that wrath has been taken away. It's been pushed aside.

And we will never experience the awfulness of God's wrath. As we know, God's wrath has been revealed in a measure against lawlessness already in this world.

And we see that in all the perversion and we see that in all the wrongdoing that goes on in this world. That is an element of God's wrath. God will reveal his wrath to a certain extent by removing his restraint, by giving people over to themselves.

And I pray that nationally we will never be given over entirely to ourselves. I cannot think of a much worse disaster that could come upon us than that God would hand us over as a nation entirely to ourselves and say, right, you don't want me.

[17:36] Right, do it you shall. On you go on your own. Because if we do not have God's favor and God's hand upon us, we are in an awful state.

Because to give people over just to their own rationale and to their own natural wisdom will bring us into all kinds of problems and trouble.

And that is why it's so important the Christian church prays. Prays that the Lord will bless us and rule over us.

It's imperative that the Christian rises to the obligations that are upon us. Because if we don't pray, who will? So we are not destined for wrath, but to obtain salvation.

Not just the deliverance from wrath, but to receive all the blessings that salvation bring. Blessings of peace and love and joy and hope and all these great things, great heavenly inheritance that lies ahead of us.

[18:43] Who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with him. Whether we are awake or asleep, I think in the context here, it can mean different things.

I think if we follow back through from chapter 4, it's talking here about living, those who are dead and those who are alive. Because there had been this great problem, remember, where Paul is addressing because the church in Thessalonica thought that the Christians who had died were going to miss out terribly at the return of Jesus.

But Paul shows, no, they're not. We looked at that so we're not going to go back down to look at that again. Other people think that where Paul says here that whether we're awake or asleep means about whether the Christian is awake and watchful or whether they're slumbering Christians. And other people think it means just naturally whether it's at night and we're asleep or whether it's during the day and we're awake. At the end of the day, it doesn't really matter. I think it's talking about life and death.

But what Paul goes on to say is who died for us that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up just as you are doing.

[20:09] You know, that was a great church. Just as you're doing. They were in the business of building, building one another up. We live in a world where people are always being knocked down.

We live in a very cruel world, a malicious world. And we see that so often on the social networking where people are, where there are a lot of horrible things being said.

We live in a world where people are forever being knocked down. And it's cheap, it's easy. Children start that from a very early age.

It's natural. It's not something we have to learn. It's part of the fall. That's the legacy of sin. And you'll see it in young children where they begin they can be quite vicious in what they say to one another.

We live in this world where there is so much knocking down. And there are people who give their lives to knocking people down. and to discourage you.

[21 : 13] The Christian should never. May the Lord keep us from ever embracing the standards of the world. People talk about worldliness and they think of worldliness in certain ways.

Let me say that's one of the worst forms of worldliness that you can get. Is to embrace the malicious attitude of the world that is seeking to destroy and to bring people down.

the churches in the business of building up of encouraging. And it's something we need to ask the Lord to give us the grace that we will be encouragers.

That was one of the reasons why Paul said to this church in Thessalonica that you are examples to all the churches round about. And this obviously was one of the reasons is that they were in the business of building each other up, encouraging each other, not knocking each other down.

And then Paul moves on and he says to them, we ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

[22 : 28] Now, to a certain extent, sometimes you'd say to yourself, well, as a preacher, I would find it very hard to say to people, now you've got to respect me and you've got to esteem me very highly.

That's not what it's saying. I always feel that respect is something that has to be earned. What is spoken of here, I believe, is the office, whether it is as a minister or an elder or a deacon or whatever it is, that we respect that.

But you'll notice what qualifies it all, who are over you in the Lord, who labor among you and are over you in the Lord.

Now, what we've always got to remember is that any person who has any place within the church is at the end of the day a servant. And any person who loses sight of the fact that they are a servant have got it all wrong because we are serving the Lord.

He is our master. It's got nothing to do with lording it over people because if ever a person is in the position of responsibility and thinks straight away that this responsibility gives them the right and the authority to lord it over people, then they've got it all wrong.

[23 : 51] Just look at the life of Jesus. Look at the example that he set before us. Look at his humility. Look at his serving. And that is a pattern.

That is the way the church is to follow. And that's what Paul is saying here because the key to it all is it's in the Lord. And as long as Christian workers in whatever sphere and whatever level we're working must always remember that it's our work to the Lord and it's in the Lord.

And so we're told to esteem them very highly in love esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

Now remember it's the Lord's work. This is what we have to esteem. The laboring. The work.

Because this is the work that God has given to do. And that ties in with not knocking down.

I can't remember where I read it but it was one of the wee headings given on this very theme and it was entitled Roast Pasta for Lunch.

[25 : 01] In other words where people go back after the sermon and they roast the pasta. In other words it's being critical and this is they're saying this is the very opposite of what we should be doing rather than seeking to build up and encourage.

God's work remember is a difficult work in this world. And if any person doesn't think it is then they don't understand the nature of the work.

I remember speaking to a particular minister and I'm don't get me wrong I'm not looking for this is not looking for a sympathetic ear in it I'm just telling you how it is.

And he said in his first couple of years in the ministry he kept asking the Lord for forgiveness for how critical he had been of ministers before he ended up in the ministry himself.

Because he had no idea of how demanding and exhausting and of how overwhelming the work was. And I think I need an aspect of it that we often forget and it's not just within the ministry but anything within the gospel work is.

[26 : 09] Remember something there is an enemy who is out to destroy you all the time and the more you do for the Lord the more you are a target for the devil.

The more you do for the Lord the more Satan has you marked. And often there is a non-stop non-stop assault from the evil one.

And that is why it is so important to pray for those who are working for the Lord in whatever capacity it is. I remember hearing an old man an old Christian and he was saying he was in a particular

congregation and there was a wee bit of difficulty there and somebody in a kind of critical frame asked him what do you think of your minister?

Oh he said the blessing that I am receiving from praying for him. And I think that is the greatest thing to take on board this word this idea of esteem esteem them in prayer.

Pray for those for it doesn't matter what role within the church a person has and remember everybody is given different gifts. Some it is a prominent role they have others it is behind the scenes but those who are working behind the scenes sometimes are working in the most effective way and it might not be in what is a church structured way as such but they are working they are doing so much for the Lord and I know that within this congregation there are so many people and they are working away quietly and their ministry is in the Lord and it is effective it is affecting and touching so many people's lives that is how it should be and that is really what has been spoken about here and then Paul goes on and says be at peace among your shells and again that is essential for a church to develop and grow if we are at peace with our shells a peace a community of peace is a platform to work from if there isn't peace can we honestly expect the community outside to be attracted to a place that a place of conflict a place of division of course not but if it's a place a platform of love and of peace we are then on a on a platform where the gospel can be promoted and then finally

[28 : 51] Paul then he deals as it were with three groups of people here and he says we urge you brothers admonish the idle encourage the faint hearted help the weak admonish the idle this speaks about those who are careless those who are out of line and if people are out of line then say for instance if you looked at it at say trooping the color and you see that it's just such a wonderful display before the queen and everybody is in step and everything is brilliantly in time but if there was one soldier here and one soldier there that was out of step and out of line it would cause it would straight away it would hit you and everything would go it would be so messy and you'd say what a shame and Paul is saying if you get one or two out of line within a fellowship it causes all kinds of problems so he says admonish them deal with them you've got to teach them you've got to speak to them and bring them back into line and then encourage the faint hearted those I would say are the timid those who struggle in the faith those who feel the going heavy and there might be some in here today and that's how you feel you feel that one day you're going to be overwhelmed one day it's going to be too much for you one day you think

I'm not going to make it well we're told to encourage such and then finally help the weak now there's a big difference here between the weak and the faint hearted they're not the same the weak if we follow Paul's writings are those who are not strong in the faith in the sense that they cannot deal with the Christian liberty they're the kind of people who are bound by legalism they were in Paul's time writing back into in the church to the church in Corinth there were those who they wouldn't eat certain meats they observed all the Jewish rituals they were bound by legalism and Paul is saying with regard to them be patient help the weak teach them these people need teaching they need instruction and then finally he says be patient with them all let us remember as we seek to be patient with one another let us remember that God is patient with us imagine what it would be like if God was not patient with us we would all have been cut off long ago we would all have been wiped away but God was patient with us that's why we're here today and how dare we when God is patient with us turn around and be impatient with one another may we seek for the grace in to have this patience let us pray oh Lord our God we we ask to bless us this day and we ask that we may take to heart the words that we have heard we pray that we might be encouraging one another we pray that there might be within our own heart the desire to grow in grace and to grow in the knowledge of the

Lord Jesus Christ we pray to be with us and take us all home safely and bless the cup of tea in the hall we pray have mercy upon us cleansing us from our sin in Jesus name Amen