

Paul ended chapter 4 explaining that Christians who have died before the return of Christ will be resurrected to participate in the event along with the Christians who are still alive at the time. In chapter 5 Paul continues by describing “the day of the Lord,” a period of time that will mean judgment for the world but deliverance for believers in Christ. Paul then exhorts us to righteous lives in anticipation of Christ’s return.

1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

**“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you”** – Paul had obviously already taught them about the return of Jesus Christ because in the previous chapter he cleared up a misunderstanding they had concerning those who died before Christ’s return (1 Th. 3:13-18). The “times and the seasons” refers to the conditions that indicate that Christ’s return is near. Paul states that there is no need for him to include more information about the return of Christ in this epistle because they already had been taught all that they need to know about the timing of when Christ will return.

**“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night”** – “The Day of the Lord” is a prophetic expression referring to the “day” when the Lord will pour out His wrath on the world and establish His righteous rule over the earth. It begins with the rapture of the church, spans the 7-year tribulation period and ends at the conclusion of Christ’s millennial kingdom on earth. Because Paul had already taught them this during his first visit (Acts 17:1-10), the Thessalonians were already familiar with the fact that Christ was coming again but the timing was unknown. The comparison of Christ’s return to “a thief in the night” indicates that the world will be surprised by His coming. Paul obviously had in mind what Jesus said in **Luke 12:39-40** “*And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*”

3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

The Greek word translated “sudden” means “unexpected; unforeseen.” False prophets have always dismissed the prospect of God’s wrath on sin and this will certainly be true during the tribulation. The world will believe that they are safe in their sin but will be surprised when they begin experiencing its consequences. Their “destruction” (judgment) will begin gradually and increase in intensity like the labor pains of a pregnant woman (**Matt 24:8** “*All these are the beginning of sorrows [labor pains]*”). They will not be able to escape the judgment of God.

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

**“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake [to seize; to catch] you as a thief”** – Since world is in “darkness” because they have rejected the light of Jesus Christ, the day of Christ’s return will take them unprepared. This should not be true of believers who have been enlightened by the light of Christ and are aware of His imminent return and the coming judgment of the world.

**“Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day”** – We have the light of God illuminating our hearts. **2 Cor. 4:6** “*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*”

**“we are not of the night, nor of darkness”** – As children of God, we are not lost in the darkness like the rest of the world.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

**“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch [pay attention] and be sober [self-controlled]”** – People who are asleep are oblivious to their circumstances (such as a thief breaking into their house). The world is oblivious to the fact that Christ can return at any time, but Christians should remain constantly vigilant and aware that Christ’s return is imminent and thus live accordingly.

**“For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night”** – Sleeping is something that is done by those who are “in the night” and thus are not watching. Being drunk is also something done by those who are “in the night” (in that day, being drunk during the day time was considered shameful) and thus are not being self-controlled. This is the way of the world.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

**“But let us, who are of the day, be sober [self-controlled]”** – Since Christians are of the “day” (living in the light of Jesus Christ - 2 Cor. 4:6), we ought to live so that we will be ready for Christ to return at any moment. See Jesus’ parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13).

**“putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation”** – Paul uses the example of military armor to illustrate the protection we have through faith, love and the hope of salvation. He used a similar illustration in Eph. 6:13-17. The breastplate protected the soldier’s vital organs. Faith protects our “vital organs” as we trust in God’s promises and resist Satan’s lies. Love prevents us from sinning against the objects of our love, both God and other people. The helmet protected another vital area of the body: the head. It is just as important to protect the head as the vital organs that the breastplate protects, and having the hope (expectation) of salvation is also just as important as having faith and love. Without the expectation that trusting in Christ will bring salvation, there can be no incentive to living in obedience to Christ.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

Paul has been describing in general terms the wrath of God’s judgment that will be poured out on this world during the tribulation (v. 3). This wrath is described in further detail in the book of Revelation. Paul tells us that it is not God’s purpose or plan that we suffer this wrath because God’s plan for us is salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. This statement also serves as evidence that the rapture will occur before the 7 year tribulation period.

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

**“Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him”** – Paul’s context is still concerning the Thessalonians’ fear that Christians who have died before Christ’s return will “miss out” on taking part in the event (1 Th. 4:13-17), stating that Christ died for us for the express purpose that, whether or not we are alive when He returns, we would live eternally with Him.

**“Wherefore comfort [encourage] yourselves together, and edify [build up] one another, even as also ye do”** – Paul encourages the Thessalonians to take these things he has said and use them to encourage each other and to “build up” one another. They were already encouraging and building up one another (as a result of their love for one another – 1 Th. 4:9), and Paul urges them to continue to do so, particularly in light of the new information he has provided.

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

**“And we beseech [request; beg] you, brethren, to know [to pay attention to; recognize; acknowledge] them which labour among you”** – Paul begs the Thessalonians to acknowledge the work that their spiritual leaders do for the benefit of the church.

**“and are over you in the Lord”** – The phrase “are over you” carries more of the idea of responsibility than authority. Leaders such as pastors, deacons, Sunday School teachers, etc. have a responsibility given to them by God to watch over the spiritual well being of the believers under their care, helping them grow and mature in the knowledge of the things of God.

**“and admonish [to warn] you”** – Part of the responsibility of these leaders is to warn the people of the dangers of sin, rebuking and correcting them when necessary. This is not a pleasant task for the leader or for those he must correct, but it is as necessary as the correction and disciplining of a child when he/she has done wrong.

**“And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake”** – Paul urges them to appreciate, love and honor these leaders for the work that they do for the church and the burden of responsibility they shoulder.

**“And be at peace among yourselves”** – Rather than complaining about or fighting with each other and their leaders, they should exercise love and be at peace with each other.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

**“Now we exhort you, brethren”** – Paul now gives a series of short instructions that he urges the Thessalonians to follow (vs. 14-22). These instructions constitute a list of Christian virtues that should govern our behavior.

**“warn them that are unruly [disorderly; out of line]”** – They are to warn those who are not living as they should. They are not to threaten the unruly, but warn them of the consequences of sin and help them to repent and return to obedience to God.

**“comfort [encourage] the feebleminded [fainthearted], support the weak, be patient toward all men”** – These three commands tell us how to deal with those who are spiritually weaker than ourselves. The “feebleminded” are those who have become fearful and are in need of encouragement. Those who are strong in faith should help support those with weaker faith. No matter the need of the weaker, the stronger should be patient with them and help them mature and grow so that they can become strong. This patience should extend even to unbelievers. (“all men”), so that perhaps we can lead them to the Lord.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

Our natural response is to repay in kind those who have done us wrong. Paul says that we should never let a desire for revenge prevent us from doing what is right and good. This same rule applies whether dealing with other Christians (“among yourselves”) or non-Christians (“all men”).

16 Rejoice evermore. 17 Pray without ceasing. 18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 19 Quench not the Spirit. 20 Despise not prophesyings. 21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. 22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

**“Rejoice evermore”** – A Christian has every reason in the world to rejoice despite his/her circumstances. The promise of redemption from sin and eternal life with Christ should be enough to give us joy unspeakable, not to speak of all the other blessings that God has given us.

**“Pray without ceasing”** – It would be humanly impossible to pray constantly without a break. This instruction means that prayer should be a regular and consistent part of our life.

**“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”** – Rather than complaining about what we don’t have, it is God’s will that we thank Him for the blessings that He does give us. Israel failed in this respect in the wilderness when they were not grateful for the manna God provided and wanted meat instead to eat (Num. 11:4-34).

**“Quench [suppress; extinguish] not the Spirit”** – When the Spirit of God is leading us in a particular direction, we should listen and obey instead of stubbornly suppressing/ignoring His voice in our hearts so that we can follow our own desires.

**“Despise [disregard; consider of little value] not prophesyings [messages from God]”** – Prophecies can include the foretelling of future events or the speaking of a message from God. Today it refers to preaching from the Bible, the only true source of revelation from God. We are to respect the preaching of God’s word.

**“Prove [test; examine] all things; hold fast that which is good”** – While respecting the preaching of God’s word, we should not blindly accept everything that is said. We are to examine the preached word carefully to verify that it is in agreement with scripture. Whatever passes the Biblical test should be accepted and embraced while anything contrary to scripture should be shunned.

**“Abstain from all appearance [shape or form] of evil”** – Continuing on the idea of proving all things, Paul says we should reject evil in whatever form it presents itself, even if it claims to be of God (2 Cor. 11:14 “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light”). Unfortunately, not everything found in Christian bookstores or heard on Christian radio and TV can be trusted and should be tested.