

1 Thessalonians Chapter 5

1 Thessalonians 5:1 "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you."

“But”: Paul used familiar Greek words here to indicate a change of topics within the same general subject of prophecy (4:9, 13; 1 Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). The expression here points to the idea that within the broader context of the end time coming of the Lord Jesus, the subject is changing from a discussion of the blessings of the rapture of believers to the judgment of unbelievers.

“Times” (Greek *chromos*), denotes “periods of time” as opposed to “seasons” (Greek *kairos*), which are specific points of time.

“Times and the seasons” These two terms mean the measurement of time and the character of the times respectively (Dan. 2:21; Acts 1:7). Many of them expected the Lord to come in their lifetime and were confused and grieved when their fellow believers died before His coming. They were concerned about the delay.

Apparently, the Thessalonians knew all that God intended believers to know about coming judgment, and Paul had taught them what they hadn’t known about the Rapture (4:13-18), so Paul exhorted them to live godly lives in light of coming judgment on the world, rather than to be distracted by probing into issues of prophetic timing.

They could not know the timing of God’s final judgment, but they knew well that it was coming unexpectedly (verse 2).

Paul had no more idea of when this would happen than you and I do. He was like us, in that he was to watch and be ready. The Lord comes in an hour when we think not. Paul had gone into detail about what they could expect at the coming of Christ. Now their part is to watch and be ready.

God did not intend for any of us to know the exact hour. We are, however, children of the light.

Ephesians 5:8 "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now [are ye] light in the Lord: walk as children of light:"

These Thessalonians and all Christians of today should walk in the light, expecting that glorious coming of the Lord. We should live our lives, as if today were that day.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."

“Day of the Lord” is an all-encompassing term to describe the period that begins with the Great Tribulation, and includes the second coming of Christ and the millennial kingdom. This Old Testament expression is here identified with the parousia already introduced. It will begin unexpectedly (Matt. 24:37).

There are 19 indisputable uses of “the Day of the Lord” in the Old Testament and 4 in the New Testament (Acts 2:20; 2 Thess. 2:2; Peter 3:10).

The Old Testament prophets used “Day of the Lord” to describe near historical judgments (Isa. 13:6-22; Ezek. 30:2-19; Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:14-18), or far eschatological divine judgments (see Joel 2:30-32; 3:14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:1, 5). It is also referred to as the “day of doom” and the “day of vengeance.”

The New Testament calls it a day of “wrath,” day of “visitation,” and the “great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14). These are terrifying judgments from God (Joel 2:30-31; 2 Thess. 1:7-10), for the overwhelming sinfulness of the world. The future “Day of the Lord” which unleashes God’s wrath falls into two parts:

- (1) The end of the 7 year tribulation period, (Rev. 19:11-21); and
- (2) The end of the millennium.

These two are actually 1,000 years apart and Peter refers to the end of the 1,000 year period in connection with the final “Day of the Lord” (2 Peter 3:10; Rev. 20:7-15). Here, Paul refers to the aspect of the Day of the Lord,” which concludes the tribulation period.

“A thief in the night”: This phrase is never used to refer to the rapture of the church. It is used of Christ’s coming in judgment on the Day of the Lord at the end of the 7-year tribulation, which is distinct from the rapture of the church. And it is used of the judgment which concludes the Millennium (2 Peter 3:10).

As a thief comes unexpectedly and without warning, so will the Day of the Lord come in both its final phases.

Jesus explains in the following Scripture that no man knows the exact time of the return of Christ.

Matthew 24:36 "But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

If people knew the hour He was coming, they could be bad until just an hour or so before and then come to Christ. He does not want us to come to Him because we fear the wrath of God, but because we love Him and want to please Him. He has a purpose in this coming as a thief in the night. Of course, this has come for everyone at the end of their life on earth.

Those of one generation will not taste of death. He will come in the same manner that He went.

Acts 1:11 "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

He went up with a cloud and will come back the same way.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 "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."

"Peace and safety" were slogans of the Roman Empire. Just as false prophets of old fraudulently forecast a bright future. In spite of the imminence of God's judgment (Jer. 6:14; 8:11; 14:13-14; Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 13:10, 16; Mica 3:5), so they will again in future days just before the final Day of the Lord's destruction.

"As travail upon a woman": The Lord used this same illustration in the Olivet Discourse. It portrays the inevitability, suddenness, inescapable nature, and painfulness of the Day of the Lord.

When the unbelieving shall say, it is a time of peace, then shall be sudden destruction. We know the peace talks are going on all over the world today. This is one sure sign that the end is near.

We see in the comparison here of the woman having a child, the suddenness of the birth pains. Suddenly, unawares to her, the pains of birth begin. The world at peace has no idea that sudden destruction is upon them. The rain in the days of Noah came suddenly. It had never rained on the earth before. It was a surprise to the unbelieving world, but not to Noah.

Verses 4-9: But ye: In contrast to the wicked, for whom Christ's coming will be an hour of destruction, these believers are "Children of light" who will not face God's wrath, but will be saved at the time of the parousia.

"Not appointed to wrath": The wrath is the agony and tribulation occurring at the beginning of the day of the Lord. The believer is spared this, however (1:10; Rev. 6:16).

1 Thessalonians 5:4 "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."

"But ye, brethren": Paul dramatically shifts from the third person plural pronoun (3 times in verse 3), to the second person plural. Because the church is raptured before the judgment of the

Day of the Lord, believers will not be present on earth to experience its terrors and destruction (verse 3).

“Not in darkness”: Believers have no part in the Day of the Lord, because they have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of light (Cor. 1:13). Jesus taught that to believe in Him would remove a person from spiritual darkness (John 8:12; 12:46).

The contrast between believers and the lost is emphatic, and Paul draws it out all the way through verse 7. Believers will not experience the wrath of God because they are different in nature.

Unbelievers are in darkness (verse 2; “in the night”), engulfed in mental, moral, and spiritual darkness because of sin and unbelief (John 1:5; 3:19; 12; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 4:17-18; 5:8, 11). All these people are children of Satan (John 8:44), who is called “the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). The Day of the Lord will overtake them suddenly and with deadly results.

The Christians have the Light of Jesus to show the way. The Bible tells us of all sorts of signs that will be just before the destruction. (Matthew chapter 24), has a nice list of things that will happen. Most of them have already occurred. All true Christians have a sort of anticipation of this now.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness."

“Children of light”: This is a Hebrew expression that characterizes believers as children of God. Their heavenly Father, who is light and in whom is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5-7; Luke 18:8; John 8:12; 12:36). Believers live in a completely different sphere of life than those who will be in the Day of the Lord.

Darkness obscures our view. The light makes manifest. We can see clearly in the Light. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. If we are Christians, we are of the Light. Satan is darkness to the utmost. Darkness is the absence of the Light. Children of darkness have not received the Light.

1 Thessalonians 5:6 "Therefore let us not sleep, as [do] others; but let us watch and be sober."

“Let us not sleep”: Because believers have been delivered from the domain of darkness, they are taken out of the night of sin and ignorance and put into the light of God. Because Christians are in the light, they should not sleep in spiritual indifference and comfort, but be alert to the spiritual issues around them.

They are not to live like the sleeping, darkened people who will be jolted out of their coma by the Day of the Lord (verse 7), but to live alert, balanced, godly lives under control of the truth.

This does not mean that we are not to rest in sleep. This is speaking of spiritual sleep. Do not be unaware. The watching and waking is learning all we can about the Light (Jesus). Let His Light shine so brightly within us that it will do away with all darkness. Sober (in verse 6 above), means to abstain from wine. In other words, don't be drunk when the Lord comes back.

1 Thessalonians 5:7 "For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night."

Most sins are committed at night. Whoever is sinning seems to think the darkness will cover the sin. In daytime, most people are working. The light of day keeps many sins from occurring.

1 Thessalonians 5:8 "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation."

“Breastplate”: Paul pictured the Christian life in military terms as being a life of soberness (alertness), and proper equipping. The “breastplate” covers the vital organs of the body. “Faith” is an essential protection against temptations, because it is trust in God’s promise, plan, and truth.

It is unwavering belief in God’s Word that protects us from temptation’s arrows. Looking at it negatively, it is unbelief that characterizes all sin. When believers sin, they have believed Satan’s lie. Love for God is essential, as perfect love from Him yields perfect obedience to Him.

Elsewhere the warrior’s breastplate has been used to represent righteousness (Isa. 59:17; Eph. 6:14). Faith elsewhere is represented by a soldier’s shield (Eph. 6:16).

The “helmet” is always associated with salvation in its future aspects (Isa. 59:17; Eph. 6:17). Our future salvation is guaranteed, nothing can take it away (Rom 13:11). Paul again combined faith, love, and hope (1:3).

Not only are we to be sober, but we are to be doing the things God would have us doing. The things mentioned here are part of the armor of God. The breastplate covers the heart. This is saying then, let faith and love be so full in your heart that it covers your chest. We know how important faith is, because without faith it is impossible to please God.

In (Romans 10:9), it speaks of believing in our heart. Then faith is a product of a heart of love stayed upon God. The brain is in the head. The logic of salvation is what is meant by the helmet. We believe in our heart, but the mind gets up in the logic of it all. Salvation is sensible to the thought of mankind. All people want the hope of salvation.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,"

“Wrath”: This is the same wrath referred to (in 1:10). In this context (note especially the contrast), it appears obvious that this wrath refers to God’s eternal wrath, not His temporal wrath during the tribulation period (Rom 5:9).

We have discussed this before, but the wrath of God occurs in the 7 year tribulation period. God's wrath is saved for those who do not believe in Jesus as their Savior. The thing that saves us is belief in our heart that Jesus is the Christ risen from the dead on the third day. We must confess Him with our mouth.

We obtain salvation through Jesus Christ. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh to the Father, but by Him. He is the door we must enter to reach the Father. When we enter Him, heaven is on the other side.

1 Thessalonians 5:10 "Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

“Wake or sleep”: This analogy goes back to (4:13-15), and refers to being physically alive or dead with the promise that, in either case, we will one day live together (4:17; John 14:1-3) forever with the Savior who died as the substitute for our sins (Rom. 4:9; Gal 1:4; 2 Cor. 5:15, 21).

Jesus died in our place. He was our Substitute. He paid our penalty for sin, which is death. He gave His body on the cross for our sin that we might obtain life through Him. This is just saying that the dead in Christ and the living in Christ at His coming will partake together of the life in Him.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."

He is saying that we should take comfort in the knowledge that we will live in Him. We should build each other up, reminding those who have grown weary waiting. He says, why am I telling you this, you already do this?

1 Thessalonians 5:12 "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;"

“Know them”: This means that the people are to know their pastors well enough to have an intimate appreciation for them and to respect them because of their value. The work of pastors is summarized in a 3-fold description which includes:

- (1) Laboring, working to the point of exhaustion;
- (2) Overseeing, literally standing before the flock to lead them in the way of righteousness;
- and

(3) Instruction in the truths of God's Word (Heb. 13:7, 17).

"Are over you" indicates a governing leadership, and refers to spiritual leaders such as elders and pastors. The people are to respect and regard them highly for their labor of love.

God has an order in the church as well as in heaven. The pastor is the leader of the congregation as the shepherd is the flock of sheep. He teaches the truth. He leads the flock, by teaching from the Word of God. The job of the pastor is to teach the congregation how to live victorious lives in Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:13 "And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. [And] be at peace among yourselves."

"Esteem": In addition to knowing pastors, congregations are to think rightly and lovingly of their pastors, not because of their charm or personality, but because of the fact that they work for the Chief Shepherd as His special servants (1 Peter 5:2, 4). They are also to submit to their leadership so that "peace" prevails in the church.

This just means that the congregation, who has chosen to follow a certain pastor, should have respect for the office of pastor. The work the pastor of the church does is to benefit the congregation. You should love and respect them for the work they do for God. This is saying live in peace.

Verses 14-15: "We exhort you". Paul has discussed how the pastors are to serve the people and how the people are to respond to the pastors (verses 12-13). In this verse, he presents how the people are to treat each other in the fellowship of the church. The "unruly", those out of line, must be warned and taught to get back in line.

The "fainthearted," those in fear and doubt, must be encouraged and made bold. The "weak," those without spiritual and moral strength, must be held up firmly. Patience, forgiveness and acts of goodness must prevail among all the people.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all [men]."

It is the job of the leaders in the church to warn one in the congregation who is unruly. Sometimes it can be done with a sermon to the whole church. If that does not work, then they should be talked to kindly, but firmly. It is not good to allow someone to be unruly in the church.

The pastor must keep order to have effective sermons. We should all help the feebleminded. This could also be those who are depressed to the point of being feebleminded.

The job of the church is to help those who cannot help themselves. The weak, could mean several things here, one of which would be mental illness. Patience is one of the gifts that show when the Spirit of God is in your life.

1 Thessalonians 5:15 "See that none render evil for evil unto any [man]; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all [men]."

Christians are to turn the other cheek. We are not to try to get even for a wrong that has been done. Be kind to those who classify themselves as your enemies. Kill them with kindness.

Verses 16-22: Paul gave a summary of the Christian's virtues. These verses provide the foundational principles for a sound spiritual life in brief, staccato statements that, in spite of their brevity, give believers the priorities for successful Christian living.

1 Thessalonians 5:16 "Rejoice evermore."

"Rejoice": Joy is appropriate at all times (Phil. 2:17-18; 3:1; 4:4).

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 "Pray without ceasing."

"Pray": This does not mean pray repetitiously or continuously without a break (Matt. 6:7-8), but rather pray persistently (Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8), and regularly (Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2, 12).

The Greek word here rendered "without ceasing", is used in secular literature to denote a man suffering from an intermittent cough, one that is not continuous, but occurs at intervals. Just as this individual has the tendency to cough, though does not always do so audibly, so the believer ought to remain in the attitude of prayer though not always praying audibly.

We may not be able to pray aloud every minute of every day, but we can have a prayer in our heart at all times. This also means continue to pray until the answer comes. The fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

"Give thanks": Thanklessness is a trait of unbelievers (Rom. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:1-5). "This is God's will" (includes verses 16-17).

"In every" event or circumstance (thing), the Christian is to "give thanks" to God for the good He can bring out of the event, even should the event be unpleasant. The constant attitude of

prayer (mentioned in verse 17), will help the believer to maintain gratitude in the face of adversity.

Notice that even the bad things that happen to us, are the will of God for that moment. Troubles come to teach us to lean more on Jesus. Every problem that we overcome through faith in Him, makes us stronger than we were before. Knowing all of this, how can we do less than to praise Him in all things and at all times.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 "Quench not the Spirit."

“Quench” means putting out fire (in Matthew 12:20, Ephesians 6:16 and Hebrews 11:34). Here it is employed metaphorically to mean “stifle” or “suppress.”

The fire of God’s Spirit is not to be doused with sin. Believers are also instructed to not grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30), but to be controlled by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18), and to walk by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16).

The Christian can stifle the Holy Spirit’s workings by hindering Him from leading the believer to rejoice (verse 16), to pray (verse 17), to give thanks in adversity (verse 18), and by despising prophetic utterances (verse 20), inspired by the Spirit.

The Spirit of God within us is given so that we might minister more boldly. This same Holy Spirit is our Teacher and our Guide. He is our Comforter. Only a fool would quench any of these things. When we quench not the Spirit, we allow the Spirit of God to minister through us.

1 Thessalonians 5:20 "Despise not prophesyings."

“Prophesyings”: This phrase can refer to a spoken revelation from God (Acts 11:27-28; 1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14), but most often refers to the written word of Scripture (Matt. 13:14; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18-19).

These “prophetic utterance” are authoritative messages from God through a well-recognized spokesman for God that, because of their divine origin, are not to be treated lightly. When God’s Word is preached, or read, it is to be received with great seriousness.

What is prophesyings? In this instance, it means predictions. God has used this method to bring warnings to His people throughout the ages. We should love to hear from God what is going to happen. The only way we would despise them is if we know we are guilty of displeasing God and they are warnings to us.

Verses 21-22: "Prove all things": This call for careful testing and discernment is in response to the command (of verse 20). One is never to downgrade the proclamation of God's Word, but to examine the preached word carefully (Acts 17:10-11). What is found to be "good" is to be wholeheartedly embraced. What is "evil" or unbiblical is to be shunned.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

This is the same thing as trying the spirits to see whether they are of God or not. We must stand firmly on the Word of God and then we will not fail. Don't believe everything you hear. Check it out with the Word of God.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

We know that it is bad to do evil, but we see here that it is bad to even give the appearance of evil. The world is looking at how you conduct your life. If you give the appearance of evil, you might cause your weaker brother to sin.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and [I pray God] your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"God ... sanctify you": Having concluded all the exhortations beginning (in 4:1), and especially (from verses 16-22), Paul's ending benediction acknowledged the source for obeying and fulfilling them all. It is not within human power to be sanctified in all these ways (Zech. 4:6; 1 Cor. 2:4-5; Eph. 3:20-21; Col 1:29).

Only God (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; Heb. 13:20), for references to God as "peace" "Himself," can separate us from sin to holiness "entirely."

"Spirit ... soul ... body": This comprehensive reference makes the term "complete" more emphatic. By using spirit and soul, Paul was not indicating that the immaterial part of man could be divided into two substances (Heb. 4:12). The two words are used interchangeably throughout Scripture (Heb. 9:16; 10:39; 1 Pet. 2:11; 2 Pet. 2:8).

There can be no division of these realities, but rather they are used as other texts use multiple terms for emphasis (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). Nor was Paul a believer in a 3-part human composition (Rom. 8:10; 1 Cor. 2:11; 5:3-5; 7:34; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 6:18; Col. 2:5; 2 Tim. 4:22). But rather two parts: material and immaterial.

"Unto the coming": This fourth mention of Christ's parousia refers to the rapture of the church as it has previously at (2:19; 3:13; 4:15).

This verse does not form a definition of the constituent parts of man, but is a Hebraism to denote the whole man.

The God of peace is Jesus Christ. It is in Him that we are acceptable to God the Father. We are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He took our sin on His body and clothed us in our white linen garment free from sin, washed in His precious blood. The spirit is what we are. The body is the house the spirit dwells in.

They are in constant warfare trying to control our soul, which is the will of man. Man is a spirit, living in a body with a soul. Blameless is the same as being justified (just as if I had never sinned).

Jesus wiped the slate clean when He gave His body for our sin. We received this cleansing when we received Jesus as our Savior. It is our obligation to walk in the salvation we received. Walk in Him and you will be ready when He returns.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 "Faithful [is] he that calleth you, who also will do [it]."

“Calleth you”: This, as every time the divine call is mentioned in the New Testament, refers to God’s effectual call of His chosen ones to salvation (2:12; 4:7; Rom. 1:6-7; 8:28; 1 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 4:1, 4; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Peter 2:9; 5:10; 2 Peter 1:10). The God who calls will also bring those whom He calls to glory and none will be lost (John 6:37-44; 10:28-29; Romans 8:28-39; Phil. 1:6; Jude 24).

God is not only faithful, but He cannot and will not lie. The Truth cannot lie. God is the Truth. He fulfills every promise He made.

1 Thessalonians 5:25 "Brethren, pray for us."

Not only should the pastor pray for his flock, but the congregation should pray for their leader. I say with Paul, pray for me.

1 Thessalonians 5:26 "Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss."

The “Holy kiss” was a Jewish custom of welcome (See Luke 7:45; 22:48). It was also used by the early Christians (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14).

This gesture of affection is commanded 5 times in the New Testament and refers to the cultural hug and kiss greeting of the first century which for Christians was to be done righteously in recognition that believers are brothers and sisters in the family of God.

This is not speaking of a passionate kiss between a woman and a man, but is speaking of a warm greeting. If a kiss, a kiss on the cheek.

1 Thessalonians 5:27 "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren."

“Public reading was the foundation of spiritual accountability (Gal. 4:16; 2 Thess. 3:14).

We see from this verse that this letter is not just for the church at Thessalonica, but to all who love God.

1 Thessalonians 5:28 "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you. Amen."

(Romans 16:20, 24; 2 Thessalonians 3:18).

Paul always speaks a benediction over all of his converts. We can say with Paul, so be it.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 5 Questions

1. Why did Paul not tell them the hour and day of the coming of Christ?
2. When are we assured the Lord will come back?
3. The day of the Lord comes as a _____ in the _____.
4. Who knows the day and hour that the Lord will return?
5. When they shall say peace and safety, what comes?
6. What is this sudden coming of the Lord compared to?
7. What is one very good sign that the end is near?
8. When was the first rain upon the earth?
9. Why will the day of the Lord, not overtake the Christian unaware?
10. Where do we find a lot of the things listed that will come before the Lord's return?
11. What are Christians called in verse 5?
12. What does the word "sober" in verse 6 mean?
13. They that be drunken are drunken in the _____.
14. Put on the breastplate of _____ and _____.

15. Put on the helmet of _____.
16. God hath not appointed us unto _____.
17. Who is God's wrath reserved for?
18. _____ was our substitute.
19. Who is the leader of the congregation?
20. Why should you love and respect him?
21. Who must warn the unruly in the church?
22. Be _____ to those who classify themselves as your enemy.
23. Pray without _____.
24. What are we to give thanks for?
25. _____ not the Spirit.
26. What does prophesying in verse 20 mean?
27. Abstain from all _____ of evil.
28. Who is the God of Peace?
29. Greet all the brethren with an _____ _____.