

STUDY NUMBER TEN - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Is the Future Foggy?

Key Verse 5:1: "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you are not having need that I should be writing to you."

TEXT:

v. 1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you are not having need that I should be writing to you.

v. 2 For you yourselves are knowing accurately that the day of the Lord is coming as a thief at night.

v. 3 When they are saying, "Peace and security," then sudden destruction is coming upon them even as birth pains upon a woman with child; and they shall by no means escape.

v. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should come down upon you as a thief;

v. 5 for all of you are sons of light and sons of day. We are not of the night nor of darkness;

v. 6 so then, let us not go on sleeping as do the rest, but let us be awake and self-controlled.

v. 7 For those who are sleeping are sleeping at night, and those who are getting drunk are getting drunk at night.

v. 8 But we who are of the day, let us be self-controlled, having clothed ourselves with a breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

v. 9 Because God did not appoint us to wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

v.10 who died for us, in order that whether we are awake or sleeping, we might live together with Him.

v.11 Therefore be encouraging one another, and be building one another up, one the other even as also you are doing.

INTRODUCTION:

(As Far As You Can Go Without a Passport by Tom Bodett)

It's that time of year again. The leaves are history and the familiar whine of studded tires on pavement fills the air. We all knuckle under, pull on the ol' wool coats and hats, sniff the air for signs of snow, and throw a little straw in the dog's house. Signs of winter are everywhere. Backpackers are a rare sight, the travel section in the newspaper gets thicker every week, and house-sitting jobs are easy to come by. Alaskans are taking off like rats from a sinking ship. Normally righteous and hard-working northerners are turning in the oilskins for tacky Polynesian shirts. They're headed off to southern climes to hang around in the sun, frolic in the surf, suck on mangoes, and generally engage in an endless orgy of disgusting and nonproductive behavior. It's a sad sight, and a bit depressing as well, because I can't afford to go with them.

p. 35

(Better Homes and Jungles. Renamed Family Survival in the American Jungle by Steve Farrar)

The American corporate idiot savant also has a limited vocabulary, consisting almost exclusively of words that begin with the letter A. The following vocabulary list includes words commonly used by American corporate idiot savants. There is nothing inherently wrong with most of the words in this list. However, most corporate idiot savants are preoccupied with one or more of the following words, thus leading them into excessive and out-of-balance lifestyles. Some of these favorite words are:

Achievement	Acquisition	Advancement	Action
Ability	Arrival	Attainment	Aspiring
Ambitious	Aggressive	Adequate	Assertive
Arrogant	Accomplish	Appearance	Accumulate

It should be noted again that the corporate idiot savant's fatal flaw is his preoccupation with this vocabulary list; it costs him some of the most significant and wonderful pleasures life has to offer. The corporate idiot savant is convinced that happiness lies in realizing the list. But he is often disappointed. I think George Gilder said it best:

Men lust, but they know not what for;
 They wander, and lose track of the goal;
 They fight and compete, but they forget the prize;
 They spread seed, but spurn the seasons of growth;
 They chase power and glory, and miss the meaning of life.

p. 30

In making our SPIRITUAL CHECKUP, one of the real big questions that comes to our mind:

IS THE FUTURE FOGGY?

We have gone through quite a number of waves of prophetic interest in our present day.

Probably the greatest interests on the part of people concerning the Bible are:

What does it have to say about the future?

The other question is:

How do the things that are happening at the present time relate to what the scripture teaches?

In these scriptures that we are going to be considering here in chapter 5 we get a little glimpse of what God has planned for the future.

v. 1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you are not having need that I should be writing to you.

The 5th chapter begins with that very familiar little Greek phrase peri de, "NOW CONCERNING." This is a transitional phrase.

The question that comes to us is:

What is the connection between chapter 4 and chapter 5?

In chapter 4 we had the outline of the RAPTURE of the church,

and in chapter 5 we have an outline of the things that are going to be happening just preceding the second coming of Christ to set up His kingdom.

1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17

Because the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the call of the trumpet sounded by God's command; and the dead in Christ shall be raised first. Then we who are living, who are left behind, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

Notice that the apostle Paul once again begins this section with the word "NOW," just like he has done in the previous sections when he has been dealing with new subject material.

This 1st verse is very similar to:

1 Thessalonians 4:9

Now concerning brotherly love, you are not having need that I should be writing to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Paul did not expand fully on this subject as he had done with the rapture since he had already instructed them about the day of the Lord.

"NOW CONCERNING THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS."

This phrase is never used of the rapture.

Acts 1:6, 7

And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;

Matthew 24:36

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the son, but the Father alone.

The word "TIMES" in our text has to do with QUANTITY,
and "SEASONS" has to do with QUALITY.

Horne says:

The New Testament clearly teaches us that we cannot know how long a time must elapse before Christ returns. Times and seasons are a matter of divine determination, not human deliberation.

Hogg and Vine observe:

Here, "times" refers to the length of the interval before the Parousia takes place, and to the length of time it will occupy; "seasons" refers to the characteristics of the periods before, during, and after the Parousia. An ancient writer expresses the distinction thus: 'Times' has to do with quantity, 'seasons' with quality.
p. 149

We have chosen this verse as the KEY VERSE partly because it is the 1st verse in the section. In making our SPIRITUAL CHECKUP, if there are questions about the future and problems which we have in this regard, we would do well to heed carefully the teaching of the apostle in these 11 verses.

It would also be a good thing not to stop here but to relate the teaching of these verses with other prophetic passages of scripture in order that we might have the prophetic picture clear in our minds.

I think it would be a good thing to get in our minds what the prophetic calendar looks like before we actually dig into these verses that are coming into consideration.

Here is a very simple PROPHETIC OUTLINE to use in working through prophetic studies:

1. THE RAPTURE
2. THE TRIBULATION
3. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST
4. ARMAGEDDON
5. THE SECOND COMING
6. THE KINGDOM
7. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT
8. THE ETERNAL STATE.

I think if you can get a handle on this prophetic sequence, it will help you find significance in every passage that you study that deals with prophetic truth.

(The Rise of Babylon: Sign of the End Times
by Charles H. Dyer with Angela Elwell Hunt)

Three Specific Signposts

What are the specific signposts that can serve as indications of God's end-time program for the world? I believe there are three.

First, the nation Israel must be in existence before the final seven-year time of trouble can begin on the earth. Since 1948 this signpost has been in place. Israel is the most crucial of the three signposts because she is at the center of God's end-time agenda.

God's second signpost is a revived Roman Empire. A world power must reemerge from within the boundaries of the ancient Roman Empire. In Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 God indicates that this end-time power will take the form of a ten-nation confederacy that will exert political and military control over the rest of the world.

The Roman Empire occupied much of what today is Europe and the Mediterranean basin. Until the late 1980s it seemed impossible that this region could ever unite. The continent seemed hopelessly divided between NATO and Warsaw Pact forces, each poised to destroy the other. Within Western Europe the Common Market had failed in its goal of uniting and strengthening the European community.

But then came the traumatic events of 1989 and 1990. Suddenly Europe entered a new era. The Cold War is over, the Warsaw Pact is dead, and the European Economic Community is forging ahead with plans for a strong, united Europe.

The second signpost is not yet in place, but we can watch the European political scene with interest. The Bible predicts that ten nations will unite. Together they will have tremendous military might and economic influence over the rest of the world. The inherent instability of various countries and cultures within the European Economic Community will continue to pose problems, but this seems to match Daniel's description of the fourth empire as a hodgepodge of nations "so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united" (Daniel 2:43).

The third sure signpost is the rebuilding of Babylon. The city of rebellion where mankind first united against God will again be the scene of the crime at the end of the ages. God allows wickedness to come full circle and end at the very spot where it began.

Modern excavations among the ruins of ancient Babylon began in the 1950s, but work was slow and little progress was made for nearly three decades. But after Saddam Hussein assumed absolute control of Iraq, the pace quickened.

Not only must Babylon exist, it also must serve as the capital of an economic empire that has a stranglehold on the world. Babylon will exert economic control over the revived Roman Empire and over "peoples, multitudes, nations and languages" (Revelation 17:15). Her influences will be worldwide.

The apostle John did not identify what would enable the city to exert so much power, but he predicted it would bring her incredible wealth. The "merchants of the earth" will weep when Babylon is destroyed "because no one buys their cargoes any more" (Revelation 18:11), and the sea captains will mourn their loss of income because "all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth" (Revelation 18:19).

Almost two thousand years after John wrote his remarkable predictions, we know what can bring such incredible wealth to this otherwise barren part of the globe. Oil! Black gold! A leader from Iraq will someday rule again from the city of Babylon. He will control the oil wealth of the Middle East, a whopping 50 percent of the proven oil reserves of the world! This one-man cartel will control the economic destiny of the West, and will lavish much of his wealth on rebuilding his capital city of Babylon.

But at the end of this seven-year period, the world ruler from Europe will tire of the tactics of global blackmail being played by Babylon. Another multinational military force will travel to the Middle East. This force will enter Iraq from the northwest and attack from the north. Babylon and Iraq will be shattered.

After crushing Babylon, this world ruler will travel to Israel to finish off the country he has persecuted for three-and-a-half years. His armies will bivouac in the valley of Jezreel at the foot of the ancient tell of Megiddo in northern Israel. Here, at the "mountain of Megiddo"--Armageddon--the last great battle of this age will be fought. Jesus Christ will return from heaven with his hosts to finish wickedness and woe and to begin his reign on earth. Then Israel will finally dwell safely in the land promised to Abraham.
pp. 208-11

(The Sovereign Spirit: Discerning His Gifts
by Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

To begin with, always be suspicious of--indeed, I would go further and say, be ready to condemn and to reject--anything that claims to be a fresh revelation of truth.

I am sure you know what I mean by that. People in this state and condition claim that something has been revealed to them. There are certain well-known movements, even at this present time, which were started by people claiming to have had a special revelation.
p. 79

"SIGNS OF THE TIMES"

Speaking of the imminent return of our Lord, Gresham Guinness related that one evening he went to hear a performance of Handel's Messiah. He said that after a couple of hours someone might have asked, "How much longer will the concert last?" He said he would have answered, "Oh, about 5 minutes." The individual might have replied, "But how can that be? It's still in full swing and has been going on for a long time. Why shouldn't it continue for 2 more hours? How do you know it will be finished in 5 minutes?" Guinness said he would have replied, "Because I have the score, and they are singing the last chorus."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

"SIGNS OF THE TIMES"

O ye hypocrites, . . . can ye not discern the
signs of the times?

Matthew 16:3

Prior to Jesus' first coming, there were some who recognized that the promised Messiah was due (Luke 2:25-32,36-38). Likewise today, many students of prophecy agree that numerous signs in Scripture which point to Christ's second advent are falling into place. As we view the way history is moving and carefully scan the prophecies dealing with the "last days," we can't help but believe that the end of the age of grace is fast approaching. Then, "He that shall come WILL COME, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37).

Speaking of the imminent return of our Lord, Gresham Guinness related that one evening he went to hear a performance of Handel's Messiah. He said that after a couple of hours someone might have asked, "How much longer will the concert last?" He said he would have answered, "Oh, about 5 minutes." The individual might have replied, "But how can that be? It's still in full swing and has been going on for a long time. Why shouldn't it continue for 2 more hours? How do you know it will be finished in 5 minutes?" Guinness said he would have replied, "Because I have the score, and **they are singing the last chorus.**"

It's a wonderful fact that Christians have the "score" as it's found in the Word of God to help them recognize the unmistakable "**signs of the times.**"

Of course, we cannot and should not fix dates, nor try to pinpoint the day or the hour when the "last trump" shall sound. But we can say with confidence, "The coming of the Lord draweth near."
--H.C.B.

O the King is surely coming, and the time is drawing nigh
When the blessed day of promise we shall see;
Then the changing "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,"
And forever in His presence we shall be.

--Crosby

THOT: When Christ returns, may He not find us carelessly SLEEPING but prayerfully
SERVING!

--H.G.B.

(From Our Daily Bread, May 8)

v. 2 For you yourselves are knowing accurately that the day of the Lord is coming as a thief at night.

Here Paul states the reason why he is not having need that he should be writing to them.

He had taught them carefully during the brief 3-week period that he was in Thessalonica about the day of the Lord.

"THE DAY OF THE LORD IS COMING AS A THIEF AT NIGHT."

It is coming in an unexpected fashion.

"THE DAY OF THE LORD" is prophesied in many of the Old Testament scriptures. We will just consider a few of them:

Amos 5:18-20

Woe to you who long
for the day of the Lord!
Why do you long for the day of the Lord?
That day will be darkness, not light.
It will be as though a man fled from a lion
only to meet a bear,
as though he entered his house
and rested his hand on the wall
only to have a snake bite him.
Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light--
pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?

Zephaniah 1:14-16

The great day of the Lord is near--
near and coming quickly.
Listen! The cry on the day of the Lord will be bitter,
the shouting of the warrior there.
That day will be a day of wrath,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of trouble and ruin,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and blackness,
a day of trumpet and battle cry
against the fortified cities

and against the corner towers.

Joel 2:1, 2

Blow the trumpet in Zion;
 sound the alarm on my holy hill.
 Let all who live in the land tremble,
 for the day of the Lord is coming.
 It is close at hand--
 a day of darkness and gloom,
 a day of clouds and blackness.
 Like dawn spreading across the mountains
 a large and mighty army comes,
 such as never was of old
 nor ever will be in ages to come.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says of "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

It is God at work in world affairs more directly and dramatically than He has been--including both blessing and judgment. It begins immediately after the rapture and ends with the conclusion of the millennial kingdom. It is a major theme of prophecy with its fullest exposition in Revelation 6-19.

Peter in his pentecostal sermon in Acts chapter 2 speaks of "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

Acts 2:20

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come.

He also speaks of it in his 2nd epistle:

2 Peter 3:10

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Revelation 6:15-17

And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

2 Thessalonians 2:2

that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Ryrie says:

A study of these and other passages will show that the day of the Lord is a time of judgment and blessing. It is a time when God deals with the world in judgment for its sin. It is the period of great tribulation on the earth, but it is also a time of blessing when the earth shall enjoy the personal reign of Christ during the millennium. Thus, the day of the Lord as revealed in the Old Testament includes, first a time of wrath and judgment on the wicked, followed by the era of peace when Christ will rule over the earth. However, in this passage Paul is not discussing the entire day of the Lord but only its coming. This is important for it explains why he deals only with the judgment aspect of that day.

Ray Stedman says:

We hear these days about the new stealth bomber which the air force has developed. The plane is designed in such a way that it cannot be detected by radar. It can come upon an enemy unexpectedly without warning. The Lord will come stealthily said Paul, at a time when peace and safety seem to prevail, when nothing out of the ordinary is expected. That is how "the day of the Lord" begins.

(Escape the Coming Night by Dr. David Jeremiah
with C. C. Carlson)

A motion picture, The Last Temptation of Christ, produced in 1988, aroused so much controversy that the cover story for Time magazine was "Who is Jesus?" A New Testament critic from the University of Notre Dame was quoted: "Jesus expected a radical transformation of the world and that this would involve the coming of a heavenly figure . . . but Jesus did not believe himself to be this figure."
p. 23

When we are speaking of "THE DAY OF THE LORD" from the standpoint of the judgment, what is Paul's emphasis:

It is called by the names of:

1. DANIEL'S 70TH WEEK,
2. THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE,
3. THE GREAT TRIBULATION.

This is a 7-year period of divine wrath being poured out upon the earth.

Revelation 6-19 describe a series of 21 JUDGMENTS that are involved in this period.
There are:

- 7 SEAL JUDGMENTS,
- 7 TRUMPET JUDGMENTS,
- and 7 BOWL JUDGMENTS.

In summarizing the teaching of the Old Testament on "THE DAY OF THE LORD" we note several things are true:

1. It is to be a time which is going to come suddenly and without announcement.
2. It is going to involve a great cosmic upheaval in which the universe is going to be shaken to its very foundations.
3. It is definitely a time of judgment and wrath being poured out upon sin.

The poet put it this way:

When the great plants of our cities have turned out
 their last finished work,
 When our merchants have sold their last yard of silk
 and dismissed the last tired clerk,
 When our banks have raked in their last dollar
 and paid the last dividend,
 When the judge of the earth says closed for the night
 and asks for a balance,
 What then?

When the choir has sung its last anthem
 and the preacher has made his last prayer,
 When the people have heard their last sermon
 and the sound has died out on the air.
 When the Bible lies closed on the altar
 and the pews are all empty of men
 And each one stands facing his record,
 and the great book is opened,
 What then?

When the actors have played their last drama
 and the mimic has made his last pun,
 When the film has flashed its last picture
 and the billboard has played its last run,
 When the crowd seeking pleasure has vanished,
 gone out into darkness again,
 When the trumpet of ages has sounded
 and we stand before Him,
 What then?

v. 3 When they are saying, "Peace and security," then sudden destruction is coming upon them even as birth pains upon a woman with child; and they shall by no means escape.

Notice first of all in verse 3 that the apostle uses the word "THEY."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Note that Paul did not include himself and his readers with the group who would see the day of the Lord as he did when describing the rapture. Evidently they and them refers to those left behind at the rapture, that is, non-Christians.

At a time when people are at ease saying, "PEACE AND SECURITY," then this is the time that "SUDDEN DESTRUCTION" is going to come and the day of the Lord will be upon them.

We observe then that Paul changes from YOU to THEY in this 3rd verse because he is speaking of those who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior. The saints are not involved here.

Hendricksen illustrates what takes place in this verse when everyone is saying "PEACE AND SECURITY":

Meanwhile, like the artist on top of the ocean-rock, painting the beauty of the village upon the shore, and so completely absorbed in his painting that he sees no danger and pays no attention to the returning tide, though the waves lash higher and higher against the pedestal of his very temporary throne, so also these foolish and wicked people, fascinated with earthly charms, will not realize that judgment is creeping in upon them, coming closer and closer, until very suddenly it overtakes them, catching them wholly unprepared.

p. 123

It is too late to study for the examination when the exam paper is before you.

It is too late to make your house secure when the storm has burst.

One thing you can be sure of: the tidal wave of God's judgment is certain.

"WHEN THEY ARE SAYING, 'PEACE AND SECURITY,' THEN SUDDEN DESTRUCTION IS COMING UPON THEM."

Luke 21:34

Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap;

Horne says:

"Then sudden destruction cometh upon them." "Sudden" is in an emphatic position right in the forefront of the clause as "destruction" is at the very close. Hence, literally, "then sudden upon them cometh destruction." The verb "cometh" is in the present tense, giving a greater vividness. The disaster itself is described as destruction, not destruction of being or annihilation but the destruction of well-being and irremediable loss of fellowship with God.

"EVEN AS BIRTH PAINS UPON A WOMAN WITH CHILD; AND THEY SHALL BY NO MEANS ESCAPE."

This is Paul's 2ND ILLUSTRATION with regard to "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

1. In verse 2 when he uses the illustration of:

A THIEF THAT COMES AT NIGHT.

2. Now here he is using the illustration of:

A WOMAN EXPERIENCING BIRTH PAINS.

Hogg and Vine say:

Just as the figure of the thief suggests the unexpected character of the catastrophe, so this suggests its inevitableness. The words are strongly reminiscent of those of the Lord Jesus recorded in Luke 21:34.

Jeremiah 13:21

What will you say when the Lord sets over you
 those you cultivated as your special allies?
 Will not pain grip you
 like that of a woman in labor?

"BIRTH PAINS" according to The Bible Knowledge Commentary, speak of 2 THINGS:

1. unpredictable suddenness
2. great personal discomfort

The Greek text here in the last part of this verse uses a DOUBLE NEGATIVE to make it very clear that they shall BY NO MEANS escape.

(Point Man: How a Man Can Lead a Family by Steve Farrar)

It's like the story Steve Brown tells about two men walking in the woods who suddenly hear the roar of a grizzly bear. Both men know what grizzlies can do, and one of the men immediately sits down to put on his running shoes. His companion blurts out, "You don't really think you're going to outrun that bear, do you?"

"Of course I'm not going to outrun that bear," the man replies. "I don't have to. I just have to outrun you."
 p. 135

Just like the flood in Noah's day, once the divine judgment began there was no stopping it. No one escaped once the door of the ark was closed.

Hebrews 2:3

how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,

The poet puts it this way:

Suppose an angel told me
At early morning light,
"Your Lord will come this evening;
You will go home tonight."

Would ecstasy be clouded
By thoughts of things undone:
The seed I might have scattered,
The crowns I might have won?

The soul I meant to speak to,
The purse I meant to share,
And, oh, the wasted moments
I meant to spend in prayer?

The weight of unsaved millions
Would press upon my heart,
In their death am I certain
That I had not a part?

Just a few short moments
In which to set things right,
How feverishly I'd labor
Until the waning light!

Oh, slothful soul and careless heart,
Oh, eyes which had no sight,
Work, lest you reap but vain regrets;
Your Lord may come tonight!

(The Christian Salt & Light Company by Haddon W. Robinson)

Edward C. Bentley, the mystery writer, began his novel Trent's Last Case with an intriguing question. He asked, "Between that which matters and that which seems to matter, how will the world know that we have judged wisely?" That, it seems, is a foundational question of life. How do we judge between what matters and what seems to matter? To inhabitants of the marketplace, business matters. They get up very early and go to bed very late, and they give up what is valuable in order to build the bottom line. And yet few men come to the close of life, lie on a deathbed, and wish they had spent more time at the office. What matters and what seems to matter is often hard to distinguish.

p. 96

v. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should come down upon you as a thief;

According to The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

Paul now applies the doctrine to his readers.

The word "BUT" forms the contrast. The apostle changes pronouns again from "THEY" to "YOU" and addresses them again as "BRETHREN."

Horne says:

A sharp contrast is to be seen here between the unbelievers, of whom he has just been speaking, and the Thessalonians. Believers are not in darkness. They do not live in ignorance of the purposes of God. The light of divine revelation has shone unto them so that they should not be surprised at the arrival of the King.

"BUT YOU, BRETHREN, ARE NOT IN DARKNESS, THAT THE DAY SHOULD COME DOWN UPON YOU AS A THIEF;"

"DARKNESS" as it is used in the scripture is always used in a bad sense.

John 3:19, 20

And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

It is a picture of living in sin under Satan's domination.

Colossians 1:13

For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

1 John 2:8-11

On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Paul again returns to the illustration of the "THIEF" here in verse 4, even as he spoke back in verse 2.

"BUT YOU, BRETHREN, ARE NOT IN DARKNESS, THAT THE DAY SHOULD COME DOWN UPON YOU AS A THIEF"--

because, according to The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

By this time you will be with the Lord.

LOOKING FOR SUCCESS?

Young Oswald Chambers of Scotland, showed so much artistic promise that at the age of 18 he was invited to study under Europe's greatest masters. But he declined the offer and enrolled in a little-known Bible school, where he eventually became a teacher. Later, he went to Egypt and ministered to the spiritual needs of British soldiers. Chambers died there when he was only in his forties, but he left to the world a rich legacy of devotional literature.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

v. 5 for all of you are sons of light and sons of day. We are not of the night nor of darkness;

Now the apostle amplifies his further statement by giving a reason why "the day of the Lord" should "not come down upon them as a thief."

There is a 2-FOLD POSITIVE STATEMENT here:

"FOR ALL OF YOU ARE":

1. "SONS OF LIGHT,"

2. "SONS OF DAY."

Paul then identifies with his readers when he changes to the word "WE":

"WE ARE [negatively] NOT OF:

1. "THE NIGHT,"

2. "NOR OF DARKNESS."

"The day of the Lord" is characterized as a DAY OF DARKNESS by several of the minor prophets:

Joel 2:2

a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and blackness.

Amos 5:18

Woe to you who long
for the day of the Lord!
Why do you long for the day of the Lord?
That day will be darkness, not light.

Zephaniah 1:15

That day will be a day of wrath,
 a day of distress and anguish,
 a day of trouble and ruin,
 a day of darkness and gloom,
 a day of clouds and blackness,

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out:

Christians live in a different sphere of life from the non-Christians. It is the difference between day and night.

Ephesians 5:8, 9

for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

Being identified with Christ who is the light of the world, we thus do not walk in darkness but in light.

J. Vernon McGee says:

When the day of the Lord comes, we are going to be with the Lord. We are not in darkness. That day will not overtake us as a thief in the night. He does not come as a thief to take His church. The church is looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior.

STAYING IN THE SON-LIGHT

For ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord;
walk as children of light.

Ephesians 5:8

Returning from a journey, a man brought his wife some souvenirs. Among them was a matchbox that would glow in the dark. After giving it to her, he turned out the light, but the object was not visible. "This must be a joke!" she said. Disappointed, the husband commented, "I've been cheated!" Then his wife noticed some French words on the box. Taking it to a friend who knew the language, she was told that the directions read: "If you want me to shine at night, keep me in the sunlight all day." So she put her gift in a south window. That evening when she turned out the light, the matchbox had a brilliant glow. The surprised husband asked, "What did you do?" "Oh, I found the secret," she said. "Before it can shine in the dark, it must be exposed to the light."

Likewise, if we are to bear witness in this sinful world, we must live in close fellowship with the Savior. We must obtain strength and instruction from the Word of God and remain open to the Holy Spirit so that our being will be saturated with the beauty of our Lord. The apostle Paul wrote to the believers at Philippi, "That ye may be blameless and harmless, children of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain" (Phil. 2:15, 16). Yes, effectiveness in pointing others to Christ will depend on how much we absorb His light.

Let's stay in the Son-light by having fellowship with the Lord through prayer and study of His Word. --P.R.V.

Walk in the light! so shalt thou know
That fellowship of love
His Spirit only can bestow
Who reigns in light above.

--Barton

THOT: It's no use trying to shine if you haven't taken time to fill your lamp.

(From Our Daily Bread, May 2)

v. 6 so then, let us not go on sleeping as do the rest, but let us be awake and self-controlled.

"SO THEN" points us to the result or to the certain conclusions that are drawn from what has been said.

On the basis of what Paul has been saying, he is now going to admonish them with regard to the day of the Lord.

There are going to be 5 COMMANDS that are given in these remaining verses.

The 1st is a NEGATIVE COMMAND and the 2nd is a POSITIVE COMMAND.

COMMAND #1:

"SO THEN, LET US NOT GO ON SLEEPING AS DO THE REST."

Hogg and Vine point out:

The metaphor of sleep arises naturally out of that of night and implies a state of spiritual insensibility on the part of a believer, in which state he is conformed rather to the world than to Christ. Believers are exhorted to awake out of such a state. Here they are warned against falling into it.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Paul is admonishing them to behave in keeping with their enlightened condition. Sleeping is spiritual lethargy and insensitivity.

STAY AWAKE!

A device called Drive Alert is designed to keep you awake at the wheel of your car. It is a small, one-ounce waking aid that fits over the ear like a hearing aid. When your head nods, a buzzer sounds, jolting you from oncoming sleep. It is safer, of course, to pull off the road and catch a few winks before you enter that twilight zone. But the trouble with sleep is that it creeps up on you. You don't know exactly when you might slip into unconsciousness--and out of control.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

I was reading a book by A. W. Tozer on revival. He was speaking about how easy it is to be sleeping when we ought to be awake and serving the Lord:

We start doing things by ROTE,
 then we get in a RUT,
 then we start to ROT,
 and then we are RUINED.

Revelation 2:4, 5

But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent.

(Escape the Coming Night by Dr. David Jeremiah
with C. C. Carlson)

The Ephesian congregation was dynamic and its annual report must have looked good. It would never have matched this report I saw recently: "Annual report . . . New members: none. Baptisms: none. Gifts to missions: none." Then at the bottom of the report the church clerk had written, "Brethren, pray for us that we might be faithful unto the end."

The Ephesian church persevered through times of trouble. One of my heroes in the faith is Charles Spurgeon. He said: "Pray God to send a few men with what the Americans call 'grit' in them; men, who when they know a thing to be right, will not turn away, or turn aside, or stop; men who will persevere all the more because there are difficulties to meet or foes to encounter."
pp. 37-38

Mark 14:32-42

And they came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed." And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground, and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt." And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Keep watching and praying, that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. And He came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

Romans 13:11, 12

And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Ephesians 5:14

For this reason it says,

"Awake, sleeper,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you."

"SO THEN, LET US NOT GO ON SLEEPING AS DO THE REST, BUT LET US BE AWAKE AND SELF-CONTROLLED."

COMMAND #1 is a NEGATIVE command:

"LET US NOT GO ON SLEEPING AS DO THE REST."

COMMAND #2 is a POSITIVE command:

"LET US BE AWAKE AND SELF-CONTROLLED."

The word "SELF-CONTROLLED" is going to focus upon their conduct. It is living in light of our future.

It is so easy to:

fall into a lukewarm, careless attitude about spiritual things,
be indifferent with regard to the needs of others and the urgency of the moment,
waste time thinking we have lots of it.

Hendricksen says:

To be sober means to be filled with spiritual and moral earnestness, being neither overly excited on the one hand nor indifferent on the other, but calm, steady and sane, doing one's duty and fulfilling one's ministry. The sober person lives deeply; his pleasures are not primarily those of the senses, like the pleasures of the drunkard for instance, but those of the soul. He is by no means a stoic. On the contrary, with a full measure of joyful anticipation he looks forward to the return of the Lord, but he does not run away from his task.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

It's maintaining self-discipline in view of the great events to come.

(A Pretty Good Person: What It Takes to Live with Courage, Gratitude and Integrity by Lewis B. Smedes)

First, self-control is about deciding for ourselves the direction we want our story to take. It is about writing the kind of story with our lives that we think we are meant to write, not the story somebody else wants us to write.

Second, self-control is about being in harmony with ourselves. It is about knowing who we are and what we are about. "Identity" is the fashionable word for what I am talking about.

And third, self-control means keeping on top of the rambunctious passions inside of us. This is, to be sure, a narrow sense of self-control. But very important as a means to an end. The end is to steer our lives in the direction we really want them to take, keeping close to who we really are all the while. To achieve our end we need to prevent our passions from taking over.
p.89

Now the third thing about self-control: It is, in fact, a lot like conducting an orchestra. There are some powerful players down there inside of me--passions, desires, angers, sex drives, terrors of memories past and threats to come, and a lot more. My job is to set them free to play their parts. But if I let any one of them take charge, I would not have an orchestra; what I would have is a bunch of soloists on a binge.

Being a maestro in control of the orchestra is about playing beautiful music. It is not about enjoying the power, it is not about strutting our stuff in front of an audience. It is about making the kind of music the orchestra enjoys playing--and the rest of us enjoy hearing.

Self-control is important for the same reason that it's important for a pilot to be in control of a commercial airliner: not to show off his skills at controlling that huge flying machine, but to get his passengers home in one piece.

pp. 90-91

2 Timothy 4:5

But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Harold J. Ockenga in commenting on the word says:

It means temperate in the use of all of life's possessions and pleasures. Such sobriety is consistent with joyfulness, radiance and enthusiasm.

We would do well in light of the exhortation in this verse to heed the words of the Lord Jesus in:

John 9:4

We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work.

v. 7 For those who are sleeping are sleeping at night, and those who are getting drunk are getting drunk at night.

Now the apostle equates SLEEPING and INTOXICATION with the NIGHT.

Ephesians 4:18, 19

being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

Romans 13:12-14

The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Paul changes from the admonition to the Thessalonians in verse 6,

to describing those who are outside of Christ in verse 7.

Then in verse 8 he goes back to the Thessalonians again.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Unbelievers are neither awake nor alert, and they are controlled by forces outside of themselves.

(Counseling for Substance Abuse and Addiction by
Stephen Van Cleave, M.D., Walter Byrd, M.D. and Kathy Revell, R.N.)

... "The Twelve Steps." As one recovering alcoholic told me, "Alcoholics Anonymous won't get you to heaven, and it can't keep you out of hell, but it can keep you sober long enough to make up your own mind."

p. 105

The following letter will clarify the points we have just made.

I am an alcoholic. I need help.

Don't allow me to lie to you and accept it for the truth, for in so doing, you encourage me to lie. The truth may be painful, but get at it.

Don't let me outsmart you. This only teaches me to avoid responsibility and to lose respect for you at the same time.

Don't let me exploit you or take advantage of you. In so doing, you become an accomplice to my evasion of responsibility.

Don't lecture me, moralize, scold, praise, blame, or argue when I'm drunk or sober. And don't pour out my liquor; you may feel better, but the situation will be worse.

Don't accept my promises. This is just my method of postponing pain. And don't keep switching agreements. If an agreement is made, stick to it.

Don't lose your temper with me. It will destroy you and any possibility of helping me.

Don't allow your anxiety for us to compel you to do what I must do for myself.

Don't cover up or abort the consequences of my drinking. It reduces the crisis but perpetuates the illness.

Above all, don't run away from reality as I do. Alcoholism, my illness, gets worse as my drinking continues. Start now to learn, to understand, and to plan for my recovery. I need help from a doctor, a counselor, a psychologist, a recovered alcoholic, from God. I cannot help myself.

I hate myself, but I love you. To do nothing is the worst choice you can make for us.

pp. 82-83

v. 8 But we who are of the day, let us be self-controlled, having clothed ourselves with a breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

The word "BUT" forms the contrast from what has been spoken about in verse 7.

It is "those" in verse 7,

and it is "WE" in verse 8:

"BUT WE WHO ARE OF THE DAY."

Paul in this verse then gives us COMMAND #3.

COMMAND #1 was back in verse 6:

"LET US NOT GO ON SLEEPING AS DO THE REST."

COMMAND #2 was in verse 6:

"LET US BE AWAKE AND SELF-CONTROLLED."

And now COMMAND #3:

"LET US BE SELF-CONTROLLED, HAVING CLOTHED OURSELVES WITH A
BREASTPLATE OF FAITH AND LOVE, AND AS A HELMET, THE HOPE OF
SALVATION."

This verse takes us back to verse 5:

"for all of you are sons of light and sons of day. We are not of the night nor of darkness."

Paul now admonishes them once again in view of this "day of the Lord."

Paul includes his favorite little trio of:

FAITH,

LOVE,

and HOPE

again in this verse--even as he did in:

chapter 1:3

Constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and your labor of love and your
perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and
Father;

Ryrie points out:

"Be sober" is present tense, indicating that this should be the continual attitude of the Christian, while "putting on" is aorist, which expresses momentary action. If the putting on were present tense it would imply that the Christian might at some time or other lay aside his armor, which is unthinkable. The aorist says, "Put your armor on and leave it on." It is a once-for-all step. The breastplate consists of faith and love, and the helmet is the hope of salvation. Here once again we see the triad of Christian graces--faith, hope and love. While the details of the particular pieces of armor differ in the different passages where the figure is used, in no passage is a piece covering the back mentioned, for the Christian once engaged in the fight does not turn in flight.

p. 73

(A Pretty Good Person: What It Takes to Live with Courage, Gratitude and Integrity by Lewis B. Smedes)

Ah, "temperance," the classic way of saying self-control: Beget a temperance so that you can write a fine story with your life.

Life gets to be a mess without it. Take the lowly sphincter muscle as a vulgar parable. Getting control of the sphincter muscle is one of the five-star moments in a child's growing up. Lose it in your old age and you get a nasty metaphor of the loss of self-control.

"He who has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken into," says the Book of Proverbs. No wonder the Bible teaches us that self-control is the backbone of the good life. No wonder either that Aristotle said that self-control is a staple in living a "fine and noble" life.

p. 91

Hendricksen says:

The question may be asked, How is it that Paul suddenly and somewhat unexpectedly comes up with these articles of defensive armor: breastplate and helmet? The answer given by A. T. Robertson may well be correct. The idea of watchfulness brings the figure of a sentry or guard (and armed) to Paul's mind. By the exercise of calm and steadfast faith in and love for God in Christ, which in the midst of a wicked world becomes an aggressive testimony, the watchful and sober person wards off the poisonous arrows of temptation. He puts on faith, the certain knowledge of God and of His promises, and a hearty confidence that all his sins are forgiven him for Christ's sake; and love, the yielding of the self to God, the object of his delight in the spirit of joy and gratitude--just like a warrior would put on his breastplate.

J. Vernon McGee says:

Faith, love, hope. This is now the 3rd time these key words have appeared in this epistle. Labor of love, the work of faith, the patience of hope. Faith is a saving faith and a saving faith produces works. Calvin said, "Faith alone saves but the faith that saves is not alone." Faith looks to the past when we accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. Love is for the present which is the relationship the believer should have with those around him. The hope of salvation is that blessed hope of the future. We are not looking for the great tribulation period. I don't see how there could be any rejoicing in that. We are looking for that blessed hope which is the consummation of our salvation.

Romans 13:12

The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Ephesians 6:10-18

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

1 Timothy 6:12

Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

2 Timothy 2:3, 4

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

2 Timothy 4:7

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Standing on the threshold of an event that will mean sudden translation for some and sudden destruction for others, Christians should arm themselves for action with self-control. Faith protects inwardly, love for people protects outwardly. These attitudes equip Christians to stand ready for the rapture. The helmet guards their heads from attacks on their thinking. Salvation here equals deliverance from the wrath to come when the Lord returns.

Paul suggests equipment here to protect the heart and the head. The idea of watchfulness and preparation has brought to the apostle's mind the idea of a soldier or sentry being fully equipped and ready.

Isaiah 59:17

He put on righteousness as his breastplate,
and the helmet of salvation on his head;

Spurgeon said:

Give me a man with a hot heart and a cool brain, or a man with right doctrine in the head and a heart on fire, and he will win the world.

What a glorious day it will be when we put off our helmets for a crown and put up our swords for palm branches.

First of all, Paul speaks of the "BREASTPLATE OF FAITH AND LOVE."

The FAITH he is talking about is the faith he talked about in:

chapter 1:8

For from you the word of the Lord has been sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we are not finding it necessary to be saying a thing.

The LOVE he is talking about here is a love that he spoke about in:

chapter 4:9

Now concerning brotherly love, you are not having need that I should be writing to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

The "HELMET OF HOPE" refers to the hope that the apostle has spoken of so many times in this letter as the rapture of the church--the coming of the Lord Jesus to receive us unto Himself.

Hendricksen says on this verse:

Let us be prepared, spiritually alert, firm in faith, courageous, strong, calm, and with glad anticipation, looking forward to the future day. Thus, believers will be putting on "the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation." They may never hesitate to keep alive this glorious hope, ever bearing in mind that God did not appoint us for wrath, but for the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us in order that, whether at His return for us we are still living on earth or have fallen asleep in the Lord, we may live together in fellowship with Him.

HINDERED BY SATAN

John Dorsey describes the devil's tactics in the following poetic words:

"I had a battle fierce today
 Within my place of prayer;
 I went to meet and talk with God,
 But I found Satan there.
 He whispered, 'You can't really pray,
 You lost out long ago;
 You might say words while on your knees,
 But you can't pray, you know.'
 So then I pulled my helmet down,
 Way down upon my ears,
 And found it helped to still his voice
 And helped allay my fears.
 I checked my other armor o'er;
 My feet in peace were shod;
 My loins with truth were girded 'round;
 My sword the Word of God.
 My righteous breastplate still was on,
 My heart's love to protect.
 My shield of faith was all intact--
 His fiery darts bounced back.
 I called on God in Jesus' name,
 I pled the precious blood--
 While Satan sneaked away in shame,
 I met and talked with God!"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

v. 9 Because God did not appoint us to wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Here in this 9th verse Paul gives the reason why he wants us to put on the "breastplate of faith and love" and the "helmet, the hope of salvation."

In this verse, once again, we get a NEGATIVE and a POSITIVE statement:

[Negatively] "GOD DID NOT APPOINT US TO WRATH, BUT [positively] FOR OBTAINING SALVATION THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

In chapter 1:4 we learned of their election by God,
 and in chapter 3 we learned of the fact that they were destined for suffering,
 and now we learn in chapter 5 that God has not appointed them to wrath.

John 5:24

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

The wrath of God fell upon Jesus Christ on the cross, and thus, being identified with the Savior, we have accepted God's provision for our sin.

On Him almighty vengeance fell
 That would have sunk a world to hell.
 He bore it for a chosen race
 And thus becomes our hiding place.

Isaiah 53:4-6

Surely he took up our infirmities
 and carried our sorrows,
 yet we considered him stricken by God,
 smitten by him, and afflicted.
 But he was pierced for our transgressions,
 he was crushed for our iniquities;
 the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
 and by his wounds we are healed.
 We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
 each of us has turned to his own way;
 and the Lord has laid on him
 the iniquity of us all.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The wrath equals the tribulation period. Deliverance is God's appointment for believers.

TEMPORAL SALVATION comes through the Lord Jesus Christ, just as does ETERNAL SALVATION.

Walvoord says:

In this passage he is expressly saying that our appointment is to be caught up to be with Christ. The appointment of the world is for the day of the Lord, the day of wrath. One cannot keep both of these appointments. Certainly, there will be some after the church is gone who will turn to Christ, and in Revelation 7 it is stated that there will be an innumerable company of martyrs. Many will be saved after the church is gone to heaven but they will experience the awfulness of that period. As the wrath of God is poured upon the earth it will involve them too.

The reason for "the hope of salvation" is:

"BECAUSE GOD DID NOT APPOINT US TO WRATH."

The word "APPOINT" focuses on God's sovereignty.

"BECAUSE GOD DID NOT APPOINT US TO WRATH, BUT FOR OBTAINING SALVATION THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

He is the only way.

v.10 who died for us, in order that whether we are awake or sleeping, we might live together with Him.

This is probably the oldest statement of the most fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, the fact that Jesus died for us. He took the wrath of God for our sin on the cross of Calvary.

This is the CUP He would like to avoid if at all possible. This is why He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The Father turned His back upon the Son as He was made sin for us.

The purpose for doing this is seen in the next phrase:

"IN ORDER THAT WHETHER WE ARE AWAKE OR SLEEPING, WE MIGHT LIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This is a reference to being spiritually alert or lethargic.

This takes us back to verse 6:

"so then, let us not go on sleeping as do the rest, but let us be awake and self-controlled."

Christians are assured of life with Him whether they are spiritually watchful or not.

This is a strong statement on the security of the believer.

v.11 Therefore be encouraging one another, and be building one another up, one the other even as also you are doing.

Therefore, in view of the coming of "the day of the Lord" the Thessalonians are commanded to be doing 2 THINGS:

1. "BE ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER,"

2. "AND BE BUILDING ONE ANOTHER UP."

There are 5 COMMANDS in the passage:

COMMAND #1 was back in verse 6:

"LET US NOT GO ON SLEEPING AS DO THE REST."

COMMAND #2 was in verse 6:

"LET US BE AWAKE AND SELF-CONTROLLED."

COMMAND #3 was in verse 8:

"LET US BE SELF-CONTROLLED, HAVING CLOTHED OURSELVES WITH A BREASTPLATE OF FAITH AND LOVE, AND AS A HELMET, THE HOPE OF SALVATION."

COMMAND #4:

"BE ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER,"

COMMAND #5:

"AND BE BUILDING ONE ANOTHER UP."

We could say here that he is speaking of ENCOURAGING and EDIFYING.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This points out the fact that the early church was involved in mutual encouragement and edification.

This verse takes us back to:

chapter 4:18

So keep on encouraging one another with these words.

Here the apostle is asking them to do a couple of things that they are already doing.

From this passage of scripture we learn that there is a future day called "the day of the Lord" which is a day of judgment, a day of wrath which is poured out upon sin. It is a day which we are not to be a part of if we know Jesus Christ. It behooves us to heed the admonition of Amos 4:12 and that is to: "prepare to meet our God."

Walvoord says:

On the basis of this wonderful prospect we should comfort one another and encourage one another in the faith, "even as also ye do." As we look forward to the coming of the Lord may it not only be a part of our theology and of our hope, but may it be the mainspring of our Christian life and testimony. If today is the last day on earth before Christ comes, may it be a day that is well spent in God's service for His glory and for the testimony of the truth.

"HONKING" ENCOURAGEMENT

Therefore [encourage] each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

1 Thess. 5:11

Why are some churches vibrant and growing while others seem to be struggling and discouraged? It may be a difference in attitude. If the people of a church build up and encourage one another, the whole atmosphere is optimistic. But a critical, negative spirit breeds discouragement and failure.

Bruce Larson illustrated the power of encouragement in his book Wind and Fire. Writing about sandhill cranes, he said, "These large birds, who fly great distances across continents, have three remarkable qualities. First, they rotate leadership. No one bird stays out in front all the time. Second, they choose leaders who can handle turbulence. And then, all during the time one bird is leading, the rest are honking their affirmation." Larson commented, "That's not a bad model for the church. Certainly we need leaders who can handle turbulence and who are aware that leadership ought to be shared. But most of all, we need a church where we are all honking encouragement."

There's a lesson for each of us in the unique habits of the sandhill crane. Let's take an attitude check. Are we critical of our church leaders? Do we complain about the job someone else is doing in the church? Do we have a negative spirit? If so, it's time for us to begin to offer encouragement, to support our leaders, to build one another up. Who can tell what might happen in our church if we started "honking encouragement." --D.C.E.

If any little help may ease
The burden of another,
God, give us love and care and strength
To help along each other.

--Anon.

Live to build people up, not to tear them down.

(From Our Daily Bread, October 16)

THE CARD-SENDER

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another,
just as you also are doing. --1 Thessalonians 5:11

Some Christians find it easy to offer a word of comfort or encouragement to another in times of sorrow. But for others, finding the right words is nearly impossible, so they send their words of cheer by way of cards.

We can have a wonderful ministry as card-senders. Even someone who appears to be doing well may need a lift. On the surface, a person may seem fine--especially at church. But beneath that "doing great" exterior may be a spirit so bowed down that it's ready to give up hope. A card can help.

Let me illustrate. Susan's personal problems were enormous. She was dealing with tough issues from her past. Her husband had emotionally withdrawn from her. The family was in financial trouble. Somehow she kept up a good front at work, even though she was thinking of suicide. Then she received a Christmas card from her boss with these handwritten words: "I don't know what we'd do without you. Thank you for being so competent and helpful." Later she commented, "I framed that card and put it up in my kitchen. It's like a sign that says, 'You're okay!'"

So send that card. Write that note. Offer that word of encouragement in the name of Christ. Give that pat on the back as the Lord directs you. You may be giving someone just the lift he or she needs. --D.C.E.

It was only a brief little note,
With a sentiment prayerfully spoken,
Yet not in vain, for it soothed the pain
Of a heart that nearly was broken. --Anon.

EVEN WHEN YOU CAN GIVE NOTHING ELSE,
YOU CAN GIVE HOPE.

(From Our Daily Bread, May 30)

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: "The day of the Lord" described here in this passage follows the rapture of the church.

LESSON #2: "The day of the Lord" involves both judgment and blessing.

LESSON #3: "The day of the Lord" involves the tribulation period as well as the millennial kingdom.

LESSON #4: It is possible to be asleep spiritually and miss so much of what God has for us.

LESSON #5: To be "self-controlled" is to live in light of our future.

LESSON #6: We are commanded not to go on sleeping but to be awake and self-controlled.

LESSON #7: We are to put on the "breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation."

LESSON #8: God did not appoint us to wrath but to obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

LESSON #9: Jesus died for us on the cross of Calvary.

LESSON #10: We are to be encouraging and edifying one another.

(Think Big: Unleashing Your Potential for Excellence
by Ben Carson, M.D. with Cecil Murphey)

I bought the book and memorized the poem, "Yourself to Blame." I quoted it often to the boys because it says what I really believe.

Here's the poem in part:

If things go bad for you--
And make you a bit ashamed,
Often you will find out that
You have yourself to blame . . .

Swiftly we ran to mischief
And then the bad luck came.
Why do we fault others?
We have ourselves to blame . . .

Whatever happens to us,
Here are the words we say,
"Had it not been for so-and-so
Things wouldn't have gone that way."

And if you are short of friends,
I'll tell you what to do--
Make an examination,
You'll find the fault's in you . . .

You're the captain of your ship,
So agree with the same--
If you travel downward,
You have yourself to blame.*

*Mayme White Miller
pp. 49-50

(Why Christians Sin: Avoiding the Dangers of an Uncommitted Life by J. Kirk Johnston)

In Windows on the Word, Dennis J. DeHaan told about the importance of accepting God's Word about salvation:

When George B. McClellan was commissioned Major General of the Army, he wrote his wife, "I don't feel any different than I did yesterday. Indeed, I have not yet put on my new uniform. I am sure that I am in command of the Union Army, however, because President Lincoln's order to that effect now lies before me."

p. 74

(Topical Memory System: Life Issues. The Navigators)

I rolled in, armed my rockets, and laid down a barrage that ignited the jungle around the heavy Viet Cong gun emplacement that had been mercilessly firing on rescue forces for days. I banked to the left to get a better look at the smoke-obscured target. Satisfied with the first run, I gave the orders that I had given a hundred times before. "You're cleared hot. . . . Hit the smoke!" All we needed were just a few seconds. Just a few seconds more and we could go home. Just one run . . .

The lead aircraft rolled in, his wing man staying high to cover him. As "lead" stabilized the dive to concentrate on his target, what came up at him looked like the spray of a firehose filled with red-hot lead. The rounds glowed in the twilight sky as they sailed past his cockpit, wings, and fuselage at supersonic speed, missing him by just a few yards. He timed his release and a string of five or six bombs disappeared into the dense foliage below.

A second later, the jungle erupted in a red-hot, smoke-filled fireball, as the shock waves of the blast silenced the gun. But while lead began pulling out of his dive, he caught the last rounds the enemy gun had fired just before bombs hit. He was unable to avoid the dense, dark wall of exploding antiaircraft fire that surrounded him. The deadly shrapnel riddled his plane. A telltale tail of gray-white smoke behind his aircraft immediately impelled me deep into rescue operations and emergency procedures.

"Mayday! Mayday! Olds lead, you've taken a hit! You're on fire!"

There was no answer.

"Two," I said, addressing his wing-man, "you got him in sight?"

"Roger."

"See any chutes?"

"No chutes in sight."

"Olds lead," I said, "it looks bad. . . . You're trailing smoke."

But, there was still no answer. So I shouted, "Lead, you're in trouble. . . . Get out! Bail out! Lead . . . do you read me? Lead . . . lead . . . Olds lead, come in. . . . How copy?"

The silence that followed seemed to push reality into the surrealistic, as time and the war stood still. Once again, I was powerless. Though wanting to do so much more, all I could do was watch in the hope of seeing the parachute that would trigger yet another set of trained responses in me. But there was none.

I called again, "Olds, do you read me? How copy?"

Clearly on fire, the plane continued to climb in a right-hand turn. Then, as though the plane were flying in slow motion, gradually that climbing turn lost its initial impetus and the nose began to sink heavily into the horizon. Again and again I cried out to them, "Bail out! Bail out!" But still no one answered--still no chutes.

Deaf and dumb, the plane a mile off my wing began its macabre spiral into the jungle floor below. Pilots refer to it as "augering in." The term came from the carpenter's tool, which resembles a large corkscrew, used for boring into wood. It became part of the pilot's jargon because the descending spiral pattern of the tool's razor-sharp thread eerily resembles the flight path of a plane caught in a long, slow, gradual spin. Though a spiral gives the appearance of being under control, in reality it's not. For some reason, the vital interpretation of the instruments breaks down, and unless the crew is shocked back into corrective action, that spiral leads to death.

All we had needed was a few seconds. Just a few. But now, as the nose of their crippled plane fell below the horizon, the long, slow descent to death crystallized. Lower, lower, and lower they went until, through my tears, I screamed into the radios for the last time in the desperate hope of waking one of the two pilots, apparently knocked unconscious by those fatal rounds of gunfire. But it was to no avail. There was just silence, smoke, and a spiral whose tightening turns bored through what little altitude was left . . . and they augered in.

THE DEATH SPIRAL

Since that day, I've seen other spirals and, at times, I've been caught in them myself. Though they were of a spiritual nature, they were just as deadly. For the believer, they begin when our eyes leave the instruments--consciences steeped in God's Word--and we unconsciously start to demand from God what He never intended us to have. Or, we begin looking to get out of life what it was never designed by its Creator to deliver. In doing so, we blunder into the faith-killing insistence that God answer up to our world view. Caught in the height of presumption, we insist that the Creator serve the creature. When He doesn't, we "take a hit," and the spiral begins.

pp. 55-56

STUDY #10 - 1 Thessalonians

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

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