SINCE WE BELONG TO THE DAY…

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Key Verse: 5:8

“But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”

Thank God for showing us an amazing vivid hope and vision that the dead in Christ will rise first and we who are still alive and left will be caught together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will live with the Lord forever. What a glorious hope! May none of us miss this blessedness but obtain it indeed. What a day it will be! In today’s passage, Paul brings up the topic of the day of the Lord after mentioning the snatching of the church in the previous passage. The day of the Lord is a very significant concept in the Bible, which is in short a day of cataclysmic judgment. Then Paul tells us who we are in Christ Jesus and how we are to live in light of all this.

**First, the day of the Lord (1-3).** Paul says in verses 1 and 2, “Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” Here “now about” or “now as to” is a transitional phrase that brings a new subject. Very interestingly, before introducing the day of the Lord, Paul says about times and dates. “Times” is in Greek *chronos*, which is chronological time, calendar time, and clock time, and “dates” is *kairos*, meaning time not in the sense of chronology, but in the sense of epochs or events. So in other translations “dates” are “seasons” or “epochs.” So “times” and dates” as plural signify many times and many events. Involved in the day of the Lord are the times and the seasons – very specific times: days, weeks, years, even a millennium. All of that is going to be seen in the book of Revelation as John is given the revelation of the full extent of the day of the Lord from the time it begins until the time it ends. Jesus also uses this expression in Acts 1:7, when he said to his apostles before his ascension, “It is not for you to know the times of dates the Father has set by his own authority. The Father has fixed these in His own authority. No one knows but the Father in heaven; we just need to know it’s coming. People don’t need to know when it’s coming. Every generation needs to live in the light of the reality that it could come at any time. We should live in expectancy and anticipation.

Now let’s think of verse 2, “for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” Again “the day of the Lord” includes many times and events. It is a very big subject in the Bible. Paul in his writings in the New Testament seems to use this term sparingly. He used it here one time in 1 Thessalonians and then in 2 Thessalonians 2:2, “not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.” Apostle Peter used this term in Acts 2:29 quoted from Joel 2:31, “The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.” He used it with his own description in 2 Peter 3:10, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.” As we see, the day of the Lord is related to the judgement of God. The expression “the day of the Lord” is used four times in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, it appears around 20 times, and how it is used is also crystal clear. For example, [Isaiah 13:6](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Isa%2013.6) says, “Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty,” and 13:9, “See, the day of the LORD is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate.” [Jeremiah 46:10](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Jer%2046.10) says, “For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries” (NKJV). And Amos 5:18 says, “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,” and 5:20, “Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light—pitch dark, without a ray of brightness?” Zephaniah 1:14 says, “The great day of the LORD is near—near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the LORD will be bitter…” and 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.” And Malachi 4:5 says, “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.”

The elements of God’s wrath come generally through natural means. But the wrath in the day of the Lord in its ultimate form is supernatural. Jesus used the expression “his day” in Luke 17:24, “For the Son of Man in his day will be like lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other.” Paul said of “the day of God’s wrath” in Romans 2:5, “…you are storing up wrath against yourself on the day of God’s wrath…” In Revelation 16:14 is written, “…for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.”

The day of the Lord, it is to be distinguished from others. There is the day of Christ in Philippians (1:6, 10; 2:16). There is the day of the Lord Jesus in 1 Corinthians (5:5) and 2 Corinthians (1:14), and there’s the day of our Lord Jesus Christ in [1 Corinthians (1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Cor%201.8)). The day of Christ, in any of those forms, always has to do with believers meeting Christ. So when we’re snatched out of this earth and taken to heaven, that’s the day of Christ. It is when we’re with him and he rewards us and gives us our eternal inheritance. The day of Christ always looks at the believer before his Lord. So before the day of the Lord there’s the day of Christ for believers. After the day of the Lord, there’s one other phrase and it’s “the day of God”. Apostle Peter said in 2 Peter 3:12, “as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.” The day of God refers to eternity. After God creates a new heaven and a new earth, it is the final and forever day of God. He reigns and rules. So there is the day of Christ for believers. And there is the day of God, when God rules in eternity. And in between, all the judgments fall under “the day of the Lord”.

In this day of the Lord, there will be a beginning point, which is the snatching away of the church, the rapture of the church. There will be the time of tribulation that comes on the earth. We are living in man’s day. Obviously we are under the power of Satan and his demons, but still we operate with a measure of freedom in this world to create our own environment. This is man’s day; man is in charge. Man is in charge essentially at every level. This is the kingdom of man within the kingdom of darkness, which is under the ruler Satan. But what is coming is the Lord’s Day. It will be a day of cataclysmic judgment. That judgment will fall on those who have not repented of their sins and embraced Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Verse 3 says, “While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them, suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.” Even if people are to die tomorrow, they say, “Peace and safety.” Even if destruction may come tomorrow, they say, “Peace and safety.” It is because they are in deception when they refuse to love the truth and be saved (2 Thess. 2:10). In the Old Testament when there was no peace, false prophets delivered the message, “Peace, peace” (Jer. 8:11, 16). The Babylonians were invading, and they were at hand. But they kept saying, “You will not see the sword or suffer famine. Indeed, I will give you lasting peace in this place” (Jer. 14:13, 14). Then they invited sudden destruction upon themselves. It will be the same at the coming of the day of Lord.

**Second, since we belong to the day (4-11).** Paul says in verse 4, “But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.” Here is a transition. In verses 1-3 Paul talked about the day of the Lord coming like a thief in the night, which is destruction coming suddenly on the people who say, “Peace and safety.” Then Paul says, “You brothers, are not in darkness.” Paul distinguishes the Thessalonians believers from the people of the world. The believers who are in Christ are not in darkness, so there will be no such surprise. In other translations, “surprise” is “overtake” (KJV, NABS). To believers, there is no such surprise, no such overtaking. Those who are in Christ Jesus do not live dreading the day of the Lord. No such dreadfulness and awfulness.

After the negative statement, “you are not in darkness,” Paul makes a positive statement, “You are all sons of the light and sons of the day.” Wow! That is what we are in Christ Jesus. How can we describe the blessing of being sons of the light and sons of the day? Undoubtedly, they are in the kingdom of light. Paul said in Colossians 1:12-14, “giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Through redemption in Christ Jesus, we have been transposed from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. Jesus said in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” and then he said to the unbelieving Jews in John 12:35-36, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.” Paul said in Ephesians 5:8, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.” Here in 1 Thessalonians 5:5 Paul says, “You are all son of the light and sons of the day” extending with the unique expression here, “sons of the day.”

Then what does it means by “sons of the day”? Paul continues in verse 5, “We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.” Obviously so. Paul speaks further in verses 6 and 7, “So then, let us be not like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.” Sons of day have no part with sleeping and getting drunk which are the activities in the night. They are to be alert and self-controlled.

Psychologists generally characterize night people as antisocial, temperamental, extravagant, addictive, having mental struggles, creative, less faithful, smarter, higher battings bad habits, procrastination, frustration, difficulty, anxiety, and depression. On the other hand, day people are characterized typically by persistence, cooperation, agreeableness; they are proactive, conscientious; they get better grades; they’re responsible, and they’re perfectionists. That study was obviously written by a day person. The scientific studies even went so far as to say there are biological differences between people who are up late at night and those who get up early in the morning.

However, Paul is speaking from a spiritual sense with a general concept of night and day. Now he says in verse 8, “But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled…” From verses 4 to 8, what a logical, progressive description! And there is a triple emphasis on the sons of the day with the expressions, “sons of the day”, “not belong to the night or to the dark”, and “since we belong to the day.” Children of the day are characterized with the life of being alert and self-controlled, sober and clearheaded.

Paul said in Romans 13:11-12, “And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.” Here, Paul talked about waking up from spiritual slumber and putting on the armor of light, reminding us of a spiritual battle. Here Paul said in verse 8, “Since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.” Christians do not just struggle to be self-controlled, but also to put on faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet. Breastplate and helmet also remind us that we are in a spiritual battle with our strong enemy. We should never forget, even for a moment, that we are in a battlefield and that our formidable enemy the devil is always near us with his powerful weapon of lying in various kinds of human thoughts and ideas.

Paul said in Ephesians 6:13-14, “Therefore put on the full armor of God…Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place” and in verse 16, “In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” Truth and righteousness and faith can all be summed up in one word “faith” here in 1 Thessalonians 5:8. Here, faith is certainly faith in Christ’s death and resurrection. The death and resurrection of Christ Jesus is the truth and our righteousness. And faith includes faith in God Almighty. Faith in Christ’s death and resurrection and in God’s mighty power is our breastplate. Paul also added love to faith, obviously loving the Lord and loving his people and his flock of sheep, saying, “putting on faith and love as a breastplate.” It seems to be a complete description. What is the opposite of loving the Lord. It is self-love which includes self-pity. Those who fall into self-love in self-centredness are always vulnerable. So faith together with love is our breastplate. As we put on faith and love, the heart and other vital organs are protected under the breastplate. That protection is true in our spiritual battle. And Paul says more, “hope of salvation as a helmet.” Hope of salvation certainly contains the hope of the imminent coming of our Lord Jesus, his coming as our Bridegroom to snatch his bride out of this world of Satan. We cannot emphasis too much on protecting our head in a fight. If our brain is damaged, the battle is over. We always need faith, love and hope in our daily battle against the evil one until the battle is done. In chapter 1, Paul commended the Thessalonians for their work of faith, labour of love and endurance of hope. The living faith, Christ-centred love and steadfast hope are our spiritual armament in the spiritual warfare. While the people of the world, the children of the night say, “Peace and safety”, unwittingly waiting for the day of the Lord, the children of the day are to be alert and self-controlled, putting on faith and love as breastplate and the hope of salvation as helmet, waiting for the day of Christ.

Then verse 9 says, “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The children of the light and the day have no part with God’s wrath, although we have many hardships in this world as we live a life of faith. Again here God’s wrath is supernational vividly described in Revelation. We are on the way to salvation, complete salvation in both soul and body, not his wrath, while those who do not put their faith and hope in Christ Jesus are destined for the wrath of God.

And then Paul says in verse 10, “He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.” No one but he died for us. He went to the cross ahead of us and fought the battle to the point of death. Through this fight he made us alive. He wants us to follow him in this battle as those who belong to him. Paul said in Romans 14:8, “If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So. Whether we live or die, we long to the Lord.” When we live together with the Lord, belonging to him, we are in true peace and safety, even in the battlefield. Finally Paul says in verse 11, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just a in fact you are doing.”

Thank God for the clear teaching that the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night. Thank God that we are sons of the light and sons of the day in the grace of our Lord Jesus who died for us. We are children of the day and day people characterized with alertness and soberness in self-control. May we put on faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet in our ongoing spiritual battle each day until the battle is done.