

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

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

“times” = a space of time (in general, and thus properly distinguished from 2540, which designates a fixed or special occasion...) or interval; by implication, delay
“seasons” = an occasion, i.e. set or proper time: (the 2540 referenced above)

I thought the Greek was interesting for these words. It would seem that Paul is referencing the duration of the delay between the Lord’s first and second coming as well as the specific time designated for His second coming to establish His earthly kingdom. Paul had evidently taught these believers that these specific times (the delay and the actual return) had not been revealed to man.

Matt. 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Paul’s tone indicates that the Thessalonians had been well taught regarding the subject of Christ’s return. They had been specifically taught that the “day of the Lord” would come as a thief in the night. In other words, without warning. That the “day of the Lord” is a time of judgment, destruction and darkness is clarified in the following verses (cf 1:10).

1Th. 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.

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

It jumped out to me that Paul is making a distinction between believers, his brethren, and unbelievers through the pronouns he used. “They” (unbelievers) will think they are living in a time of peace and safety when the day of the Lord begins. Verse three indicates that this time will begin with “sudden (unexpected, unawares) destruction (ruin, death, punishment).” He then goes on to compare the scenario of events to a woman going into labor. Jesus used this same comparison when teaching His disciples about this very subject prior to His death. (See Topical Study, “The Olivet Discourse.”) In reading this through again, I am reminded that the woman knows the general time of her expected delivery; she just doesn’t know the day or the hour.

The last phrase of verse 3 is quite specific—“they shall not escape.” As this passage continues to make distinctions between “they” and “ye/we,” the implication seems to be that “ye/we” will escape.

Verse 4 declares that the believer will not be overtaken as a thief (“should” is supplied by the translators). Why? Because we are not “in” darkness; the Greek for the word *in* denotes position.

As I continue to consider previous study in the area of prophecy, it is obvious that verse 3 cannot be referencing the actual return of Jesus as King because that will happen at a time when the whole world seems to be gathering together at Armageddon to make war—not a time of peace and safety. This supports the

understanding of “that day” as a “period of time” (and is supported by the Greek) preceding His return. We identify that time as a 7-year period known as the *tribulation* or *the 70th week of Daniel*. (See journal on Daniel 9:24-27.)

(4/07) Due to recent studies I think it is important to note that the “day of the the Lord” and the 70th week of Daniel that we often reference as the 7-year tribulation period are not synonymous, but run almost concurrently with one another. The “day of the Lord” is directed toward the wicked on planet earth, and the tribulation period is directed toward the nation of Israel. The “day of the Lord” is a time of God’s vengeance; the “tribulation” a time of refining and reestablishing a holy relationship between God and Israel.

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

We are “children (a “son”) of light.” We are positioned in the family of God in Christ, The Light of the world.

John 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 12:46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

Gal. 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Gal. 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

1Th. 5:6 **Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober.**

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

“Therefore” – Because we are not positioned in darkness, but are children of the light.....

We (believers) should not live our lives like those who are in darkness (unbelievers). Sleeping and wickedness, such as drunkenness, are things associated with the night. In this context I think *sleep* is a reference to living as if there is no tomorrow and without thought of the consequences to your actions. Sleeping is a time of being unaware and not in control of our senses. I think the last half of verse six puts this thought in context. We know that Paul wasn’t teaching that actual sleep was something to avoid; we are just not to go to bed with the same mindset toward how we live our lives as do unbelievers. We are to “watch and be sober”; in other words, we are to live with an attitude of care and expectation always aware of the consequences of the things we do and don’t do.

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

We, believers, are of the day-----not the night. We are to wittingly choose to put on our spiritual armor daily. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul describes the breastplate a bit differently.

Eph. 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

Righteousness speaks of “innocent, holy, equitable character.” This is the character that is imparted to us through our faith in Jesus.

2Cor. 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

That righteousness also includes love since scripture declares, “God is love.”

1John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

The reference to the helmet as “the hope” of salvation is not referencing wishful thinking; it is a reference to confident expectation (from the Greek) of our future with Christ. As children of God, our salvation is not in doubt. It’s just that we will not experience the fullness of all that is ours until we are in our resurrected bodies in the presence of God.

The question came to my mind, “Why would Paul single out these two pieces of armor for this scripture?” I needed the scripture from Ephesians in front of me to consider this question.

Eph. 6:11-17 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

It seems to me that in reference to the subject, “the day of the Lord,” these are the most important pieces of armor; they identify us as “children of light.” They are the pieces of armor that protect us from the fatal blows of the enemy. The other pieces of armor are for general defensive purposes against the attack of the enemy.

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

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

Now a clear statement of beautiful truth. We, believers, are “not appointed to wrath.” Again, we have to remember to stay in context. What is the wrath being referenced in this passage? The Day of the Lord. The phrase “obtain salvation” is a reference to a deliverance or rescue that has been purchased (from the Greek) by OUR Lord Jesus Christ. What was the price? His life; He willingly laid down His life on the cross and shed His blood to atone for my / our sin.

“sleep” = to lie down to rest, i.e. (by implication) to fall asleep

Interestingly enough, I expected to see a different Greek word for “sleep” in verse 10, one that referenced death (as used in chapter 4)---but it wasn’t. The truth jumped out at me as even more assuring. Whether the child of God is in the right attitude or mindset or not, whether he is being vigilant and watchful or not, his/her position in Christ is sure. We will live together with Him. We are not to experience the wrath of the “day of the Lord” because it is designated specifically as a time of wrath for those who are His enemies, those who have rejected Him. It’s all about what He has done—not what I am doing! Jesus has already suffered God’s wrath to spare us.

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

“Wherefore” – Based on the above truth.....

“comfort” = to call near, i.e. invite, invoke (by imploration, hortation or consolation):—beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort(-ation), intreat, **pray**.

“edify” = build, embolden; Webster – to instruct and improve, to teach or persuade.

In other words—Based on these truths, come together with one another, other believers, to strengthen one another when the times are tough and the enemy is trying to deceive you and/or cause you to doubt. When you get together, pray. There is truth to the old saying that there is strength in numbers. The Lord promises that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He is in the midst of them. He also promises that if we ask anything according to His will, it is ours.

Matt. 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

1John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

1John 5:15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Even as Paul gives these instructions, he acknowledges that they are already practicing what he is preaching.

The main truths presented:

- We, believers, are positioned in Christ as children of light.
- It is not God’s will for His children to experience the wrath that He has purposed for His enemies and those that reject Him.
- Jesus has purchased our “rescue” from God’s wrath.
- Our deliverance from this wrath is based on the work Christ has done on our behalf—not on what we are doing or not doing at any given point in our Christian walk.
- God’s wrath will be poured out on planet earth at a time often referenced in scripture as “the day of the Lord” and is for a specific time and purpose. (cf Daniel 9:24-27)

- Those who are unbelievers, who have rejected Christ as Savior, will not be able to escape experiencing that wrath once the appointed time begins.

I think it is also important to note that chapters four and five flow as part of a narrative as Paul seeks to encourage the faith of these believers. First, he talks about the believers being caught up and transformed to enjoy the presence of the Lord forever. Then he references the “day of the Lord” as a time that will follow that catching away and will be experienced by those who are “in the night,” unbelievers. He closes this section with the reminder that the believer has been rescued from the wrath of God by the work of Jesus on the cross. Nothing we do or don’t do as believers makes any difference as far as our deliverance from this wrath. Then, just as he did in the closing verse of chapter 4, Paul reminds the believers to comfort one another with these truths.

1Th. 5:12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

1Th. 5:13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

In these verses Paul is reminding the Thessalonians to give the proper respect and consideration to those who are in spiritual leadership over them. These leaders should be easily recognizable as those who are willing to work to the point of fatigue for the spiritual health of those in the body of believers. They are also known for their willingness to remind the believers of spiritual truth and to warn them or gently reprove (from the Greek for *admonish*) them as necessary. These leaders should be respected and appreciated for their unselfish labor on behalf of the church and their true concern for the spiritual well being of fellow believers.

It’s always interesting that Paul has to continually remind believers to love one another and be at peace with one another, but it is still much needed advice for the church today. We, believers, are new creations in Christ, but we are still at war with the flesh and the attack of the enemy and his forces.

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

As Paul begins to close this letter, he begins a list of his own reminders and admonitions. When I looked at the Greek for *exhort*, I knew it sounded familiar; it is the same word translated *comfort* in verse 11. In common vernacular we would say that Paul practices what he preaches.

Reminder, Paul is addressing the Thessalonians as brethren, fellow believers in Jesus Christ.

- **Warn them that are unruly.** – This is a reference to those who are acting with insubordination to the leaders of the church. They are causing discord rather than building unity in the body.
- **Comfort the feebleminded.** – This is a reminder to encourage and console those in the church who are “little-spirited or faint-hearted.” This would

seem to reference those in the church who are of “little faith” and who are most susceptible to the attack and deceit of the enemy.

- **Support the weak.** – The Greek for “support” was quite interesting, “to hold oneself opposite to....to care for.” In other words, share your strength with those who are weaker than you. Those who are spiritually weak need the support and care of those who are spiritually strong. Because we are part of one body, this adds strength to the body as a whole.
- **Be patient toward all men.** – The previous three reminders can’t or won’t be effective unless one possesses patience. We all have different strengths and weaknesses. In my experience, it is often harder to show patience in areas in which I am strong when I feel that person should relate/respond at my own level of understanding/capability. Paul doesn’t specify criteria that merit patience being shown; we are to be patient toward all men at all times. This is another way of stating that we should learn to die to self and practice humility.

James 4:6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

1Th. 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*.

We might word this verse, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you—not as they do unto you.” Paul takes special care to note that this should be our attitude toward all men, not just fellow believers.

1Th. 5:16 Rejoice evermore.

This is not a reference to being in a constant state of laughter or euphoria. It’s a reminder that our attitude toward life is a choice. The child of God should be “pleasurably satisfied or delighted” (as Webster would put it) in spirit no matter the circumstances surrounding him/her because of the hope that is in us. I am reading a book entitled “Heaven,” by Randy Alcorn. In it he used a good illustration. Our present life is but a dot on a never-ending line in the context of eternity. In other words, the trials and tribulations of this lifetime are but a tiny speck of our lives when compared to the eternity that we will enjoy with the Lord.



That truth combined with the fact that God only allows what is for good in the life of His children should fill us with great satisfaction and delight. Jesus highlighted this principle in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matt. 5:11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Matt. 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

1Th. 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

The Greek word for *pray* includes supplication and worship. The Greek for *without ceasing* states “uninterruptedly, i.e. without omission (on an appropriate

occasion).” When we are talking to God in prayer and/or expressing our love for Him in worship, it strengthens our resolve to rejoice. It allows our heart to experience peace and satisfaction because our mind is fixed on Him. That is the precious promise of my life verse.

Is. 26:3 Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose mind is stayed on thee*: because he trusteth in thee.

Paul isn’t saying that we should spend every second of every day in our prayer closet. I view it as an open connection to the Lord through which I can talk to Him all day long as thoughts or needs come to mind. It’s living with the awareness of the presence of God and realizing that He wants to be involved in every area of your life. As the old song states, “He is only a prayer away.”

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

This verse goes hand-in-hand with the previous two. When we choose to rejoice and live in awareness of God’s presence and in regular communication with Him, we will more naturally be able to give Him thanks for all that He allows to touch our lives because we know He has allowed it in His love to accomplish good.

When I read this verse, I can interpret it two ways:

- That it is God’s will for us to be thankful for everything.
- That we are to be thankful because we know that everything He allows in our lives is according to His will.

Paul also notes that the will of the Father and the Son regarding “me” are in agreement. It’s only because of our position in Jesus that we enjoy the protection of the Father’s sovereign hand regarding what touches our lives.

1Th. 5:19 Quench not the Spirit.

1Th. 5:20 Despise not prophesyings.

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

The Greek for the word *quench* stated “extinguish.” When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in power at Pentecost, He came in the form of “cloven tongues like as of fire.”

Acts 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Taken in context with the following verses, this seems to be addressing our response to the gifts of the Spirit exhibited in the lives of others. It is through the empowerment and gifting of the Spirit that the church can stay healthy and have effective ministry to the unbelieving world.

I personally think that the abuse of spiritual gifts has resulted in overreaction on the part of many in the church—avoidance and rejection. They have been explained away as being only for the early church, but I can’t find scriptural support for that view. I grew up in churches that taught from that point of view, and even now my own response to those who make claims of possessing some

spiritual gifts is one of caution. I know that Satan is the master deceiver and takes great joy in posing as an angel of light to try and thwart God's working in the lives of believers. Thankfully I am growing in this area.....but I have a long way to go yet.

Verse 20 tells us not to summarily dismiss "prophesyings" from other believers. This is a legitimate gift. It is a reference to prediction and speaking through the inspiration of the Spirit. Again, it is the abuse of this gift that has resulted in a wrong response to those who are genuinely gifted. We are warned in scripture not to add to or take away from the Word of God.

Deut. 4:2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

Prov. 30:5 *Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.*

Prov. 30:6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Verse 21 gives us the safety net—Prove all things. We are not just to accept what someone declares is from God as true; we are to test it, examine it, use discernment to determine what is good, valuable, honest or worthy of acceptance. What does scripture declare as the basis for this determination?

Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Evidently, from the wording of this verse in Acts, the Thessalonians needed to understand this point. Any message from God will match up with the truth declared in scripture. The Berean Christians were obviously familiar with the truth of scripture declared above. The prophet Isaiah also stated this principle.

Is. 8:19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?

Is. 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is because there is no light in them.*

The "law" and the "testimony" are a reference to the revealed word of God up until that time. Any "prophecy" that contradicts in any way the revealed word of God can be confidently rejected.

1Th. 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

To *abstain* is to choose not to do, to deny one's self. The significant point is that we are to abstain from all *appearance* of evil; we should avoid any action that even looks like we might be doing something wrong.

I think it is this verse in particular that can cause one to lean toward legalism. When considered in context with the teaching Paul presented to the Romans in chapter 14, I think Paul is saying that we should always be willing to deny self if we feel our actions may cause a weaker Christian to stumble or will negatively impact a sinner's response to the wooing of the Spirit regarding salvation. Jesus is the perfect example. He didn't refuse to eat with publicans and sinners just

because the Jewish leaders didn't approve; He healed people on the Sabbath also in spite of their disapproval. He exemplified the intent of the law as He taught it in the Sermon on the Mount and followed the leading of the Spirit in obedience to the heart of the law without ignoring the letter of God's law. The Jewish leaders through the ages had corrupted God's law and Jesus taught according to God's original intent for the law.

1Th. 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.*

Paul now closes with a prayer for the Thessalonian believers. He is basically praying that the way they live their lives will measure up to the righteousness that has been imputed to them through Jesus. *Sanctify* is a reference to becoming holy and pure. He realizes that only through the empowerment of God through His Spirit can this be accomplished.

The whole person is composed of spirit, soul and body. The *spirit* is the rational part of our being that reasons and communicates, that represents spiritual life or death, the center of our being. The *soul* is the sensual, emotional part of our being. The *body* is the earthly container of the spirit and soul that gives us form and physical distinction from one another. When we accept Jesus as Savior, He saves the whole person—spirit, body and soul. It is our own body that will be resurrected from the grave and/or miraculously transformed from corruptible to incorruptible, from mortal to immortal.

1Cor. 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

“preserved blameless” = guarded faultlessly

I think Paul is expressing the desire for the believers to be diligent in staying ready and watchful in expectation of the Lord's coming (cf vs. 6 & 8).

1Th. 5:24 *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.*

The NLT translation is much clearer:

God, who calls you, is faithful; he will do this.

Do what? Preserve the believer (body, soul and spirit) until Christ comes to take us home. God is the One Who invited us to join His family and He is faithful/trustworthy to keep His promises. His word never fails. This is just another statement of the security of the true believer as far as I am concerned.

Once you accept Jesus as your Savior, You are accepting His work on your behalf. It is His power that keeps us secure—not our works. Again, works are a proof of the work of God in the life of the believer; but they have nothing to do with the process of our salvation.

1Th. 5:25 *Brethren, pray for us.*

Paul often asks for prayer for himself and those that are with him. It should be obvious, but I think it is important to note that he is asking “brethren,” fellow believers to pray for them. The culture today reflects the idea that God listens to the prayers of unbelievers as well. (4/12) I believe that the only prayer of the unbeliever that He “hears” is that of a repentant heart seeking His forgiveness

and turning to Him in faith or of asking God to make Himself known to him in a sincere desire to know the truth.

I believe prayer is the least used yet one of the most powerful weapons in the arsenal of faith. It is an area in which I most desire to become more effective. It is also one of the areas in which I most have to fight the flesh and the attack of the enemy. I have a quote in my head from somewhere—“Prayer moves the hand that moves the world.” There is great truth in that statement for every child of God.

As I continued to muse on this verse, I think there is another important application to make. I think all would agree that Paul was one of the greatest spiritual men to walk planet earth. He still felt the need for prayer support from his spiritual family. Our pastors/spiritual leaders have that same need whether they ask for it or not. It is very important that we support them in prayer asking for God to give them His protection, His wisdom, boldness for the whole Word of God without apology, patience, and to love their flock with the heart of the Great Shepherd.

1Th. 5:26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.

“Greet” = to enfold in the arms, i.e. (by implication) to salute, (figuratively) to welcome:—embrace

“all the brethren” = all the believers, men and women

“holy kiss” = a kiss that is pure; one that projects loving concern—not lust

I like this verse because I am a natural “hugger.” The intent of this verse is that we are all family and should care about each other as family. Family members don’t avoid touching one another. Many cultures incorporate kisses into their greetings—mostly on the cheeks. Sadly, it is the degenerate moral culture of our society and/or extreme legalism that makes the Christian family afraid to act like one.

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

Paul intended for this letter to be read to the whole body of believers at Thessalonica; it wasn’t just to the leaders or just to the men or just to the grown ups—it was to all believers. Some might argue that he was qualifying those who were to hear it as those who were holy. The important truth is that we are holy before God only because of the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. No believer is holy in and of self.

I think the wording of this verse indicates that Paul knew he was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—just as the prophets of God of old knew their words were directly from God. He was confident enough to invoke God’s name in instructing that all believers be allowed to hear its contents.

1Th. 5:28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

The first *epistle* to the Thessalonians was written from Athens.

Paul ends this epistle in the same way he started it—with a pronouncement of his desire that the blessing of the grace of the Lord be a part of their lives.

I was reminded that most scholars believe this to be the first letter that Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.