

Don't Predict the Timing of the Day of the Lord; Always Live Prepared for It!

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What enables us to be ready for the last day? Pastor leads his family in today's "Hopewell @Home" passage. 1Thessalonians 5:1–11 looks forward to the second serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these eleven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that what prepares us for Christ's return is not knowing its timing but knowing Him Himself: trusting in Him, loving Him, and being sure that everything He does succeeds.

Thursday, May 19, 2022 ▫ Read 1Thessalonians 5:1–11

Questions from the Scripture text: What have they asked about (v1a)? What does he say about their need for further instruction (v1b)? How does he summarize his teaching about this (v2)? What will people be saying at the day of the Lord (v3)? But what comes upon them on that day? What difference in condition makes this experience of the day different for believers (v4)? How should we live, if we don't want the surprise to be of the sort in v3 (v5)? How do v7–8a describe the sort of life that is not guided by light? What three things keep someone living for Christ and eternity instead of self and pleasure (v8b)? To what have those who are unwatchful and self-indulgent been appointed (v9a)? To what have those who live watchful, self-controlled lives been appointed (v9b)? What has Christ done for us (v10a)? To secure what for us (v10b, cf. 4:17)? What do we do for one another, when we remind each other of life in fellowship with Christ now and forever (v11)?

Some information is available to us. The apostle did not want the Thessalonians to be ignorant (4:13) about what happens to believers at death and about the order of events on the last day (4:14–17). So sometimes, comforting one another is by reminding each other of what we know truly from the Bible.

But some information is not available to us. The timing of the last day is a secret and will arrive as a thief (v2). So, sometimes comforting one another is by reminding one another that we already have fellowship with Jesus (v10), so that we build one another up into walking with Him (v11).

Those who focus on "timing" when it comes to "last things" distract from the main issue: that we are always to live as those who belong to the world of light, not to this world of night (v5). We are not to try to figure out the timing, but to live as those who are always ready. It's those who live in darkness that are overtaken by the day to their harm (v4).

There are people who think that they are peaceful and safe, living uncarefully and self-indulgently, as if there will never be any consequences (v3). Spiritual sleep-walkers and drunks, they are not watchful or sober (v6). Even in the church, they use the language of grace to make it sound like sin is no big deal. They are not urgent about the coming of the day and the need to be prepared for it.

The Spirit here teaches us that living without desire for the last day, and urgency about being prepared for it, does not come from the gospel. It is faith, love, and hope (v8) that actually makes a man live soberly—self-controlled, intentionally for the returning Savior.

Trusting Him, knowing His love to us, living from love for Him... these are a breastplate. They guard the heart from the deadly arrows of complacency and self-indulgence. The hope of salvation—rejoicing already in the completion of our redemption that occurs in the last day—is a helmet that guards us from the mind-destroying temptation to live for the pleasures of the moment.

Hearts and minds protected by the gospel produce not careless living, but zealous and diligent living for Christ. A gospel life is opposed to vain speculations about when the return will come, because it is too busy living constantly as one who belongs to the next world, as one who is ready at any moment for that world to break into this one. It considers fellowship with Jesus the great thing in eternity, and so it is obsessed with fellowship with Him as it lives in time (v10). This is what He died to secure (v10a)!

How should thinking about the last day make you live? What part of eternal happiness can you have now?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for reminding us, like You did for the Thessalonians, that Your return is unpredictable. Forgive us for being more concerned with figuring it out than we are with being ready for Your return and with living like those who belong to You. Give us that faith and hope and love that enable a watchful, sober life. And make us to enjoy fellowship with Jesus both now and forever, which we ask in His Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP98 "O Sing a New Song" or TPH389 "Great God, What Do I See and Hear"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

First Thessalonians 5 versus 1 through 11. These are God's words but concerning the times in the season's brethren you have no need that. I should write to you for yourselves. No perfectly that the day of the Lord. So comes as a thief in the night. For when they say peace, safety and sudden destruction comes up on them as labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they shall not escape, but you brethren are not in darkness, so that this day should overtake you.

As at the Eve, You are all sons of light and sons of day, we're not of the night nor the darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober For those who sleep sleep at night. Those who get drunk her drunk at night, but let us who are of the day.

Be sober putting on the breastplate to faith and love and as a helmet, the hope of salvation for God to not appoint us to wrath. But to obtain salvation through our Lord. Jesus Christ who died for us that whether we wake or sleep. We should live together with Him.

Therefore comfort, each other and edify. One. Another just as you also are doing,

So it's evident that they have written to Paul about some things and They're hoping that he will answer them. And one of the things they've asked for is more information about the timing of the return of Christ. And it's interesting that the apostle who started the last portion that we studied in this letter from last week, saying I do not want you to be ignorant.

Tells them that there's information that we're not given namely the timing of the return of Christ. So of course, Although the Bible tells us lots of things and the churches are ignorant of many of those things. The and they're not interested in increasing or sharpening their doctrine Then we turn around to something that the Lord says he has not told us and churches.

Ever are pontificate about the exact timing of the return of Christ. It is just like us and our fleshliness to do so and we are I don't know if you'd say good company. But we're in company with the Thessalonians and Paul starts out our facets and concerning the times and seasons.

You have no need that. I should write to you for you yourselves. No perfectly, no fully that the day of the Lord. So, comes as a thief in the night. In other words, it comes unannounced. It comes unexpected. It is intentionally that way and there's intent behind it. God intentionally makes the return of Christ unpredictable and if the scripture tells us that then we need to stop predicting and just live in a state of constant.

Preparedness. Since those who want to predict it, they want to be able to do something differently to meet it when it arrives but they won't get the chance to do something differently. And when it arrives, it'll be like labor pains upon a pregnant woman. They'll be saying peace and safety but they think.

Peace and safety is the absence of Jesus, and if you don't have his sacrifice, if you don't have his righteousness, that's actually sort of true. You don't have real peace and safety but it's not going to be peace and safety when he shows up, that's going to be pain and danger.

So they're saying, peace and safety in verse 3 and sudden destruction comes upon them as labor, pains upon a pregnant woman and they shall not escape. Well, that's for people who think that being inactive and indulging. The flesh are the, the preferred way of living. That's the kind of person who lives in darkness who says, there are unwatchful and they're drunk and he says, believers aren't supposed to be unwatchable.

They're supposed to be watchful. There's supposed to be intentional. There's to serve God in this world as people who belong to the next one. And there are people who say, well, if the stuff that we do, if the Lord should carry, a few generations is just going to be wiped out by what happens in subsequent history.

Then why should we do it? Well, the person who says, why should we do? It doesn't know why he should do anything. Why should you do anything to advance the success of what you're going to do? No, but whatever God does That is what matters and he's doing a lot of things in this world.

He just doesn't measure the way that we measure. The reason we do things is because of faith and hope and love. And you've heard those things before they're tied together, most famously, I think in first Corinthians 13, but I, there's four or five of these faith. Hope and love are faith, love, and hope or love faith and hope statements in the New Testament.

And these are the things that keep us from falling into carelessness and self-indulgence. These are the things that help us watch and be sober, faith and love protect the heart. They are the breastplate We trust in what Christ is doing. And so, we do what he says, not because we know the entire plan because we trust him who has made the plan, and who is executing his plan?

And he's active, not inactive and he is soon returning. And so we trust him like a soldier. It's not your job to know the entire plan. It's your job to be wherever he has placed you and to do whatever he has told you to do in that place. And there's great Liberty in that Then you can love your wife and enjoy your food, and work your job and be generous with others and be a faithful member of your congregation.

And you don't do that. Clenching your teeth with anxiety over. What is happening in the world or even in the church, You're grieved over every disobedience to the Lord. Of course, and you're grieved over those, who's souls are in the midst of destruction, of course, and with the love of Christ, you appeal to others by his gospel.

But you don't worry because your master has placed you where you are and giving you your instructions. He has secured your victory by his obedience and His blood. And he is accomplishing the carrying out of the plan of applying that victory by his Almighty power. And so your liberated from having to be Jesus, people who are invested in their lasting personal success are trying to be Jesus.

Jesus is our success and He does succeed and it makes vigorous living possible rather than we be saying peace and safety. We be watchful and we be sober. So over here, meaning pleasing Christ. Rather self-indulgent. The drunk person is completely self-indulgent. All his inhibitions are are gone, but love to Jesus, trust in Jesus and then love to Jesus guard the heart and then the hope of salvation, the certainty of Jesus's success, guards the mind.

And with our hearts and minds shaped by trusting in him doing everything out of love to him and then secondarily, of course, love to the brethren. Love to your neighbor and being certain that he is carrying out his salvation. The hope of salvation. These are the ways that we live not carelessly and self-indulgently, but always for Christ.

And if you're living that way, and Jesus, suddenly appears, What is the nature of that suddenness? Is it terror for you? No, it's rejoicing because the one for whom you live and the age that you've been hoping for the entire time, you've been living for him is suddenly here.

And so when he appears you're not like, oh no mountains, fall on me, that's how people who do not have faith in Christ and love for Christ and hope of salvation. That's how they're respond and we must watch against our hearts desiring to know the exact timing. We should desire his return.

It's one of the last things in the scripture or the, the spirit, and the bride saying come Lord Jesus, and the Spirit, and the bride saying to others come to Jesus, before He gets here, So we should desire his return. But he's already told us that we're not going to know the timing of his return.

We're just gonna rejoice when it happens. And the key to rejoicing when it happens is not getting stuck and what so much of the church's stuck in The Lord have mercy. There are people who their use of the end of first Thessalonians, 4 in the beginning of first Thessalonians, 5 is to come up with theories.

About the return of the Lord, and changing on the fly. What they are doing based on how long they think it is until Jesus returns When obviously the point of the passages are you don't know when he returns. So always live in the same believing loving sure of salvation way, as Christians are supposed to have lived for the last 2,000 years.

Well, that applies to us, not just to tell you to resist the the impulse of your flesh to speculate about the timing of the return of the Lord Jesus. It applies to us. Because, how are you supposed to live today? The rest of this day out of faith and hope and love, or in the order, they are here and our passage faith and love trusting that Jesus has saved you.

And that he is doing everything rightly and love knowing how much he has loved. You being full of love to him and living in such, love from him. And for him being enabled, thereby to love one. Another and we often flatter ourselves that we love him. Well, and then we turn her around and we are exposed by how we think of and feel and speak towards our brothers and sisters.

Quite literally most days. Since the brothers and sisters that you interact with are your blood brothers and sisters, and this family. So, how you're supposed to live the rest of this day? Trusting in Christ, knowing his love for you being full of love to him. And therefore for one another, and then being certain that everything that he's doing is accomplishing the salvation that he has earned for you.

So it says who died for us, we're not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who died for us. That. So what did he earn by his death? Whether we wake or sleep, whether we are alive or in the intermediate state, when our bodies rest in the grave and our souls depart, and be with Christ, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

So live in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, and you will be prepared either for your death or for his return, Therefore comfort each other. And edify one another. Just as you also are doing. And you see the gentleness of the apostle there, Obviously they've needed some instruction, but he sees a work of grace begun in them and he wants to remind them that even though he's correcting them that what he hopes to see them grow in is something that the Spirit has already started producing in them and that very last bit and verse 11 teaches us to sweeten or salt if you prefer savory over dessert.

All of your instructions with appropriate observations of God's grace, in others. Plus, we be too severe and not be Christ like Apostle like instruments in the Lord's hands. So you also measure, children should know that although we do need this instruction that I am grateful to God for all of the evidence of grace in you thus far.

And we look to him to continue to give grace until the day of Christ in the work is completed. Let's pray and ask him for that grace. Her father in heaven. We thank you that you have already given Christ for us that the final outcome has been secured. We thank you that your spirit is applying Christ to us giving to us that which is price secured by his death.

Resurrection and we pray that you would deliver us from idle. Speculations trying to figure out things that your word does not tell us and even tells us that we don't know but instead stir up our faith and love and hope by what your word has told us. So that we may always live in such a way as the surprise of Christ's return will give us great gladness.

Make us to live and fellowship with Him. Now, even like unto that fellowship that we will have with him when we pass from this world or when he returns for. We ask these things in his name. Amen.