



This morning, what can I do that will evoke a change within your life?
 What could I say, that will bring you peace in life's circumstances and situations?
 More importantly, what needs to change in your life, so, that you are certain about the things to come?

Steve last week addressed some of the questions that some new Christians in Thessalonica had regarding future judgement, and the issue of those that had died before Christ's return. Would they be at any disadvantage? And the answer was, No. We saw clearly that those that had died with a faith, would rise first, and those with a relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, would then join with them in the air.

That passage of scripture finished off with the call to encourage one another with this truth. So, hopefully this past week you have been genuinely encouraged to stay the course, run the race of faith with more certainty and joy.

Let's pray

Today, our passage continues in Thessalonians 5:1-11.
 Today I am going to do something a little different for me. We are going to break this into sections, where we will read these verses and then I will bring some thoughts out from them.

The Day of the Lord

1 Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 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.

So, just like before, Paul is answering another question regarding the rapture. It's almost like a follow-on question. Now, some of the believers want to know when it would all happen and more specific, what time? what season?
 However, we see that Paul quickly puts this issue to rest. He makes it abundantly clear, that this is a question that doesn't need to be asked, because it isn't for us to know.

In fact, in **Matthew 24:36**

³⁶ “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.

Did you notice that not even the angels, not even Jesus, know the time or season - only the Father does?

All we need to know is the simple fact that we need to be ready. Because Jesus' return will be when all least expect it. Jesus is returning, so be found ready.

Q - I wonder, would you be ready if today was the day, or would be taken by surprise? We could be all sitting here and then in a blink of an eye, many sitting, would suddenly disappear. Would that be you, left behind?

That is how sudden the return will be. Paul likens it to a thief in the night. You don't know the thief is coming, you don't know the date, or time but I'm sure when you wake, you know that you had been robbed. And it is all too late.

So, while many others that lived in Thessalonica rested on the comforts and safety provided by might and power of Rome, and others sort the false sense of security that money and possessions brought them, the church was being reminded of the truth about Christ's life, death and resurrection, and their personal response to that was so much more important.

In fact, from what I have read, there was a saying that permeated through Thessalonica at this time and that was a phrase - Pax Romana. It simply means- Roman Peace.

From the era of Augustus Caesar 27BC through to Marcus Aurelius' in 189 AD, the political stability, cultural advances and military might enabled it's members and supporters to move around with ease and relative safety. Thessalonica was such city, under the peace and protection of Rome.

While many sort the relative peace, security and comforts that Rome brought to a city, there was often an accompanying decline in those living a moral lifestyle. Romans focused on, and sort, easy and comfort, while the Greeks chased after pleasure and knowledge.

The implication, the encouragement for the believer was don't stop everything and wait, just in case today is the day. Also, do not be in fear for when that day does occur, continue to live, continue to be the example that others need to see.

Q- What does this mean for you and me?

Well, it means that we are to be active in the work of sharing the gospel, help those in need, live the example, and be the difference.

Do not rest and put our feet up and expect that the church is here to meet your ever whim and expectation as we wait for Christ return. Instead, let us each use the gifts and talents given to us to lead people to the saving works of Christ, and thus keeping them away from an eternity without God.

Let us be the difference.

So, in this chapter we see Paul, once again steering their focus to what he had already shared with them.

Basically, Paul is saying: 'Just live in a way that reflects that which you have confessed to believe, and to what he and the others had already been shared with them. You are not lacking anything; what we told you, is all you need for now. Just live it'.

Don't just wait and expect others to do everything, be found ready. That means each individual, young or aged, actively living out the new faith they were/ are professing, seeing personal holiness over pleasure and convenience.

Paul was quick to remind them that no matter what others do or think. No matter what persecution or trouble that they were facing right now, continue to trust God's word, continue to trust the message that Paul, Silas and Timothy brought, because their responses, their actions were important.

So, while many others of Thessalonica rested on the comforts and safety provided by might and power of Rome, and others sort the false sense of security that money and possessions brought them, the church was being reminded of the truth about Christ's life, death and resurrection, and their personal response to that was so much more important.

The return of Christ will be the same.

Christ's return will be-

Sudden and unexpected (like a thief in the night)

Sudden and unavoidable (like labour at the end of pregnancy).

One Has No Warning and The Other Has No Escape.

Today, it doesn't matter how much faith you have in man-made systems and ideas, armies or economics, they will fail you. They cannot save you. What truly matters is where do you stand in relation to the one true God that will come back to usher all those that are his, into true rest, eternal rest.

The implication for the believer is don't stop everything and wait, just in case today is the day, however, don't be in fear for when that day does occur, continue to live, continue to be the example that others need to see.

This leads us onto our next selection of verses. V4-7

4 But you, brother's and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.

Essentially, Paul is saying to the church, another reason, if you need any more, remember that you have been adopted into a new spiritual family. You are no longer a member of the darkness (spiritually asleep) but now you are a member of the light. (spiritually awake) Recreated, made new, brought into the family of God. This is the simplicity of the scriptures- 2 ways, 2 options.

You know Jesus as your saviour, or you don't. Anyone found on that day not "with the Lord" will experience great sorrow and pain because it will be too late for them to escape the judgement of being eternally separated from God, and they will have to bear the consequence of their own sin.

Paul is not trying to scare the Thessalonian believers, but rather, to encourage them. To remind us all that the Day of the Lord poses no threat to us, and that because God is 'fair and just' that their enemies (those that are persecuting them) will be justly judged for their actions.

But until that time, they ought to pray for those that are persecuting them, those outside of the faith, so they might come to know the Lord.

Throughout scripture, darkness and light are mentioned a handful of times. So, if someone was spiritually awake, they have responded to the spirit's call and committed their life to living by the truth of the scripture, and by following the example of Jesus. Thus, being said, being spiritually asleep refers to being closed to the spirit and thus living by the wants and whims of the flesh.

So then, (and this is the point that I want to focus on), whether we are ready for Christ's coming or not, depends simply on a decision you have or haven't made to follow after teaching found in the Bible/ follow and learn from the lifestyle of Jesus, and try to live the same way. You are either still in the darkness or already belong to the light. That again is the only 2 choices we have. No fence sitting, no mix of colours.

Just a simple choice. Paul then continues with the metaphor about a light and darkness, but now he is focusing on our actions and responses, to such positions.

**V6-6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.
7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.**

Paul's first charge to the church was, be different. You are following the truth; you are living in a way that you are concerned about holiness and seeking to honour God with your actions and speech. So, now be different because you are different. This is what it means to be a wake and sober- your life has different goals and perspectives.

The only way to have real peace, life changing peace, is to know and accept the effort that God has gone to, to restore you from a place of darkness and move you to a place of light.

John 3:16-17 -16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

So, those that profess that they are in the light, should be sober, a wake and clear minded. It's a great idea to check our motives and lifestyles to make sure that the culture around us is not stealing our focus and desire to live in holiness, to please God. We should continue to seek grace and mercy offered by way of the cross- daily. For each of us to be future thinking, eternity focused, and truly understanding that Christ enables us to live in peace and in love with all others.

And then just the other week, Steve mentioned the acronym GOD- Growing or Dying.

If you're not growing, if you're not moving forward in faith, then actually your faith is dying. Faith needs to be demonstrated by word and actions and for you and I to take time for honest reflection on where we fall short, where we allow sin to take a hold within our lives, and then repent. Turn around, live differently, do things differently.

V8-11

8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. 9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.
11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.**

Paul appeals to the believers was on the basis that they are “of the day, or of the light” and as such they should be living according to the truths that he has already shared with them. Their lives should be a contrast in lifestyle, that is drastic and different as day is to night.

And part of this contrast, is for you and I ‘putting on ‘faith and love’.

Paul had this expectation that they (believers) were to actively be doing something. Seek righteousness, holiness, seek to honour God above in all things all, out of thankfulness and gratitude because of what Christ has done for us.

God’s deep desire for them, for us (the church) is not that the wrath which will come to the earth, but the full salvation that will be theirs when the Lord returns for them in the clouds.

Just want to point out that v10 again jumps back to the preceding chapter. So, whether you are awake (living in Christ now- part of the day/Light) or if you have died in the faith (asleep) we can have confidence that we are going to be with Christ in heaven. We will be where he is.

Paul mentions putting on two pieces of armour in particular: the breastplate and helmet. As such, we are to put on the breastplate of "faith" (our confident trust in God) and "love" (our full acceptance in Him). The breastplate protects us from the deadly blows of the enemy; and being secure in faith and love protects us (see also Eph. 6:10-20).

Paul reminds them to love others that are still in darkness. Love. Not tolerate, but love.

Seek the best for them, go out of your way to assist and help and encourage, and to continue to set the example, to be the example, but doing all things in such a way that reveals God’s true love for them as part His creation, and that Jesus Christ sufferings and resurrection was for them.

We are also to wear the helmet of the hope of salvation (that is, our expectation of full deliverance and glory in our resurrected bodies because of Christ willing obedience to the Father.). The helmet protects our head; our thoughts and keeping the hope of our salvation before us. Therefore, we are encouraged to be transformed by the way that we think, that is why we are to meditate on the word of God, so, that we are always keeping salvation and eternity before our eyes and mind.

However, the Greek word “hope” does not carry the same meaning as the English. In English, the word has the idea of a wish, something that might happen or come true i.e- “I hope it doesn’t rain tomorrow.”

Whereas, in the Greek, the word incorporates the idea of confidence, and in our case, that’s confidence in God’s promise.

“...that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7).

Hope in this sense is resting, waiting in the reality of something that will happen or take place.

This is living in the light. Living in hope.

So, we have: FAITH, LOVE AND HOPE.

Faith- in God’s plan for redemption by way of his Son.

Love - that is extravagant but offered to all.

Hope- a true confidence, and not just wishful thinking, instead it is real and tangible.

So, this morning, be encouraged in your faith. In our waiting for the return of Christ. We are being encouraged to keep doing that which you are doing. Don’t just sit back and wait, instead be involved, live /serve and engage in a life of faith. Because if you are not growing, you’re dying.

COMMUNION

*He took bread, gave thanks and broke it,
and gave it to them, saying,*

**"This is my body given
for you; do this in
remembrance of me."**

Luke 22:19

