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1 Thessalonians 5
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By Dan Maines

1 Thessalonians 5

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

Now as to the periods and times, brothers and sisters, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord is coming just like a thief in the night.

† Paul reminds them that they already know the nature of the day of the Lord.

† The imagery of a thief emphasizes suddenness and

unexpectedness.

† Jesus used the same imagery in Matthew 24:43, reinforcing Paul's consistency with Christ's teaching.

1 Thessalonians 5:3

While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

† The false assurance of peace was common under Roman rule.

† Sudden destruction came upon Jerusalem despite outward confidence.

† Josephus (Wars 6.5.2) described how people were deceived into thinking safety was at hand, only for destruction to overwhelm them.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-5

But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, so that the day would overtake you like a thief, for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness.

† Believers are not caught unaware because they live in light.

† The contrast is between those prepared in Christ and those unprepared in darkness.

† Philo (On the Creation 29) contrasted the life of light and knowledge with the ignorance of darkness.

1 Thessalonians 5:6-7

So then, let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk, get drunk at night.

† Spiritual watchfulness and sobriety are required of believers.

† Sleep and drunkenness symbolize apathy and unpreparedness.

1 Thessalonians 5:8

But since we are of the day, let's be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

† The imagery of armor recalls spiritual warfare.

† Faith, love, and hope protect the believer in times of trial.

† Clement of Rome (1 Clement 61) also exhorted the church to put on faith and love as protective virtues.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

† Believers were not appointed to wrath but to salvation.

† Awake or asleep, living or dead, all belong to Christ.

† Justin Martyr (First Apology 18) stressed that salvation in Christ delivers from judgment.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you also are doing.

† Mutual encouragement strengthens the church.

† Building one another up is central to Christian fellowship.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

But we ask you, brothers and sisters, to recognize those who diligently labor among you and are in leadership over you in the Lord, and give you instruction, and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

† Paul calls for respect toward leaders who labor faithfully in teaching.

† Leadership is tied to service, not domination.

† Ignatius (Letter to the Trallians 2) urged churches to honor their leaders for their spiritual labor.

1 Thessalonians 5:14-15

We urge you, brothers and sisters, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek what is good for one another and for all people.

† Practical commands for community life: correction, encouragement, support, and patience.

† Repaying good for evil reflects Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:44.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

† These short imperatives summarize the Christian life.

† Joy, prayer, and thanksgiving are constant marks of faith.

† Tertullian (On Prayer 29) wrote that continual prayer was the strength of believers.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

Do not quench the Spirit, do not utterly reject prophecies, but examine everything, hold firmly to that which is good, abstain from every form of evil.

† The Spirit was active in their midst, and Paul warns against stifling His work.

† Prophecy was to be tested, not blindly accepted or rejected.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (Community Rule 1QS 5.9-11) likewise emphasized testing and separation from evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete, without

blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will do it.

- † Paul's prayer looks to full sanctification and preservation.
- † God's faithfulness assures fulfillment.

1 Thessalonians 5:25-27

Brothers and sisters, pray for us. Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. I put you under oath by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.

- † Prayer, fellowship, and public reading of Scripture bound the church together.
- † Public reading emphasized that apostolic letters were authoritative Scripture.

1 Thessalonians 5:28

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

- † Grace is the final word of blessing for the church.

How it applies to us today

- † 1 Thessalonians 5 reminds us to live as children of light, watchful, sober, and filled with hope.
- † We are called to mutual encouragement, respect for leaders, and perseverance in prayer and thanksgiving.
- † In the fulfilled kingdom, we live daily in the assurance that God has delivered us from wrath and sanctifies us fully in Christ.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

- † Matthew 24:43 - thief in the night imagery
- † Josephus, Wars 6.5.2 - false assurance of safety before destruction

- † Philo, On the Creation 29 - light contrasted with darkness
- † Clement of Rome, 1 Clement 61 - faith and love as armor
- † Justin Martyr, First Apology 18 - salvation from judgment in Christ
- † Ignatius, Letter to the Trallians 2 - honoring leaders in the church
- † Tertullian, On Prayer 29 - continual prayer as strength
- † Dead Sea Scrolls, Community Rule 1QS 5.9-11 - testing and separation from evil

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