

Joshua Haldeman grew up on the prairies of Saskatchewan. When the domino effect of the Great Depression hit Canada... Haldeman lost his five-thousand-acre farm and had to start from scratch. ... He tried his hand at chiropractic medicine and politics. ... Then Haldeman discovered his passion—flying airplanes.

In 1950... Haldeman uprooted his family and moved halfway around the world to South Africa (a place he had never even been to before!) ... With the help of his wife (Winnifred) and their children... he disassembled his 1948 single-engine airplane. ... The airplane was packed into crates... shipped to South Africa... and reassembled by the family once it got there.

A few years later... Joshua and Winnifred Haldeman embarked on a thirty-thousand-mile round-trip flight... from Africa to Australia and back. They are believed to be the only private pilots to have ever made that flight in a single-engine airplane. ... As a comparison point... Charles Lindbergh's legendary transatlantic flight in 1927 was only 3,600 miles. Twenty-seven years later... the Haldemans flew more than eight times as far!

Few people have heard of Joshua and Winnifred Haldeman... but I bet you've heard of their grandson Elon Musk. ... Musk's entrepreneurial exploits are well documented. ... He has turned the automotive and aerospace industries upside down. ... At SpaceX headquarters... there are two giant posters of Mars. One shows a cold... barren planet. The other looks a lot like Earth. ... The second poster represents Musk's life purpose — colonizing Mars.

How does someone even conceptualize colonizing a planet... in the non-science-fiction sense? ... Dreams are not conceived in a vacuum. One of Musk's biographers noted... "*Throughout his childhood, Elon heard many stories about his grandfather's exploits and sat through countless slide shows that documented his travels.*" ... Those stories were the seedbed of Musk's imagination. Those stories were the shoulders he stood on.

Do you have stories that serve as the seedbed for your life's drive and purpose...? ... (Maybe you don't have spectacular grandparents like Joshua and Winnifred Haldeman) – but every believer in this room should be able to answer “yes!” ... Scripture is to serve that purpose for us. – But (let's be honest) we don't use them in the same way that Elon Musk was driven by the stories of his grandparents. After a while (no matter how much we believe the Scriptures) – the power of inspiration that those stories bring... begin to fade. ... UNLESS we purposefully keep them fresh (in the forefront of our thinking.)

I am positive that it was the constant reminder of his grandfather's exploits that has given Elon Musk his driving purpose. BUT we have so much more! We have the truth of God's Word and God's indwelling Spirit to keep it alive... dynamic... and propelling us. We have truthful stories and a supernatural driving force inside of us.

When our lives are filled with unusual challenge... we need to intentionally refresh ourselves with God's truth – like what we find contained in today's passage. (You see) the Apostle Paul wrote it... because the believers in Thessalonica were under the hardship of persecution... They were suffering at the hands of unbelievers... because of their faith in Christ.

The Apostle Paul does not give them any new truth (something they did not already know.) But he gives them powerful motivation by reminding them of truth (which Paul says they previously knew **FULL** well.) But the sense is that they were losing their sense of inspiration from it. ... And you know... I probably won't tell you anything new today (that you didn't already know.) But I want to remind you of it... because it is easy for us to lose our motivation – if we do not stay focused on it.

Paul sought to accomplish two things with his original readers (the Thessalonians.) ... 1) He wanted to press them on... to live genuine godly lives. 2) He wanted to encourage them... in light of their current suffering. (I hope that this will be as timely for you... as it must have been for them.)

Now Paul does this in a most fascinating manner. First... he reminds them about the coming “Day of the Lord.” God will not be silent forever. Wicked men and women (including those who are persecuting you) will suffer God's wrath.

Second... Paul moves quickly from metaphor to metaphor... (day/night... awake/sleeping... sober/drunken.) Through these metaphors... he shows the difference between believers... and such wicked people as their persecutors. He will even state (very clearly) what their opponents will receive... and what believers will be spared from. God's righteous judgement will fall on their enemies... but not on believers.

But before we read the passage... there is something very important... that you need to be “keyed into.” ... Make sure that you notice how definite Paul draws strict contrast. Pay close attention to the pronouns in this passage. Observe how he switches back and forth between “you”... “we”... “they”...

and “them.” (I don’t know how many years I have read this passage – and only until recently they have caught my eye – something so obvious (they have been there the whole time.) ... All through this passage Paul builds a stark contrast between “us” and “them.” He describes how each group (believers and unbelievers) will experience the “Day of the Lord.”

1 Thes. 5:1-11

You may recall from last week’s passage (the verses just before this... 1 Thes 4:13-18)... that Paul has just comforted believers (who feared that their loved ones who had fallen asleep in the Lord... would somehow miss out on the blessings of the coming kingdom at Christ's return.) ... Paul assured them (however)... that there would be a glorious reunion prior to the establishment of the kingdom. ... The dead in Christ would rise first... then those who were alive would be transformed. ... Both groups would be "caught up" together to meet the Lord in the air. ... This doctrine of the Rapture of the church was meant to give encouragement to those who were grieving the loss of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now... starting with verse 1 in our passage today... Paul takes a turn — not a 180-degree shift to an unrelated topic... but a 90-degree turn to a different side of the same matter - the end times. ... Paul was no longer discussing the details of the Rapture. ... Now he's moving to an event that unbelievers will have to face... but Christians will be spared from. (Last week’s passage focused on what will happen to Christians. The very next passage... that we just read... deals with what unbelievers will go through.)

1 Thes 5:1

“Concerning the question of ‘when’... and concerning the question of ‘what life will be like’... you have no need to have anything written to you...”

Why?

Verse 2 gives us the answer... He is about to remind them of something that they are **FULLY** aware of...

1 Thes. 5:2

Now this day of the Lord is a day of sudden destruction. ... What kind of a day is that? ... What does the Bible mean when it uses the terminology “*day of the Lord*”...? ... FIRST let’s recognize that it is not talking about a 24-hour period. ... The word *day* is used in a broader sense. It means, “a *specified period of time*,” (like when we tell our kids “*you know... back in MY day...*”) ... But this is a future day... and this “day” (or period of time) will be when God is going to break His silence on all the wickedness that is (and has been) in the world. He is going to judge this world. The Bible calls **that** – “*the day of the Lord*” and it is described all through Scripture. Listen to what Joel says in Joel chapter 2, verse 1:

Joel 2:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, ² a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations.

Jeremiah said, in Jeremiah chapter 30 and verse 7:

Jeremiah 30:7 (ESV)

⁷ Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it.

What a time that must be! As Jeremiah said... there is nothing that can be compared with it. ... Daniel said in Daniel chapter 12 and verse 1:

Daniel 12:1 (ESV)

¹ "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

And the Lord Jesus Christ... when Jesus was giving that lesson on prophecy on the Mt. of Olives... said...

Matthew 24:21 (ESV)

²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

Jesus is saying... there's not going to be any time... no time to be compared with this time. ... In the Book of the Revelation... (chapter 6)... we hear of men who are literally praying for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them... and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

Revelation 6:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Now think about it. Think what Joel said. Joel said... "*Tremble — because a day of darkness and of gloom is coming.*" ... Jeremiah said: "*There's nothing to be compared with it.*" ... Daniel said: "*It's a time of trouble — there's never been a time like this since there was a nation.*" Jesus' words were: "*Great tribulation—never has there been a time like this; never will*

there be a time like this." ... And in the Book of the Revelation... men in that time are praying for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them. They're going underground because "*the great day of His wrath is come.*"

All of this will come about as suddenly and unexpectedly... as a thief in the night. It comes abruptly... (with great surprise)... because to the unbeliever there is no warning.

The Day of the Lord will be a day of catastrophic destruction... as verse 3 goes on to say... And here is one of the places where the pronoun Paul used is extremely important to notice.

1 Thes 5:3

To reinforce the fact that the catastrophic and sudden destruction will be for unbelievers rather than for believers... Paul shifts his pronouns from "you" to "they." ... He's not referring to believers who have been raptured to heaven... but to unbelievers who remain on the earth. ... At first they will place their confidence in false promises of peace and safety. (This is probably what the Antichrist will make them believe he is giving to them... after the chaos that the disappearance of so many believers will create.) But while they're waving their banners of blind devotion and shouting slogans of unquestioned loyalty, "destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape."

The wrath of God (that has been building up for thousands of years) will suddenly break forth. Just as a pregnant woman cannot escape labor pains... no one who is on this planet will escape this judgment and destruction. It is so absolute that Paul used one of the strongest

expressions in the Greek language: οὐ μὴ *“They shall not – by no means – escape.”* Every human who is alive at that time... and has not trusted Christ... will face this terrible day of God’s wrath.

“Listen up Thessalonians (and every Christian who suffers for your belief) ! God has not turned a blind eye. His wrath will come... It is a sure thing!”

Genuine believers will be blessed... and unbelievers will suffer the wrath of God. Because of this... the way a believer is to behave (in the meantime) – matters greatly to God! The next verses – to the end of our passage today – will focus on the believer’s behavior (in light of the coming Day of the Lord.)

Verse 4 transitions us over to the subject of what believers are to do with their understanding of END TIMES prophecy. We are not in the dark. We have understanding. We are not ignorant of what will happen. So... what are we to do with this knowledge?

1 Thes 5:4

“But as for YOU... Brothers...” ... Paul now shifts the focus from unbelievers... What I just said – was not about you. “But as for you...” Notice that he brings believers back into the picture. This coming surprise of pain and destruction will not be the case for God’s people.

No Christian should be surprised at what is happening. *“Oh! I can no longer have any confidence in the election system in America!”* ... *“Or the legal and justice system!”* ... *“Or freedom of speech that is falling to the wayside!”*

You and I can take the Bible (the Word of God)... along with today's news broadcasts... and put them side by side. Then we can say: "*I know what's going on.*" ... The Christian is the only one who can make sense out of the situation that we're in. We are the only ones. We're not in darkness... and we will not be overtaken as a thief might do.

But don't allow this understanding that **WE** have... (but **OTHERS** do *not* have)... to be a source of pride! This is meant to "*light a fire under our feet.*" ... We are not to be "*asleep at the switch.*" ... (Paul uses several metaphors in these verses – so I thought that I would add a few of my own... here.)

1 Thes 5:5-6

When a person is asleep... he is not alert. He is not involved in what is going on around him. When a believer is spiritually asleep... he is oblivious... and UNinvolved in the work of God around him. He slumbers.

Now... since we have understanding... we ought to be awake. ... I mean... we need to be living... living expectantly – with eternity's values in view... and keeping with the urgency of these times. (LISTEN!) Our understanding the times... is to be ***a reveille to wake us up!***

I believe that God's alarm clock is going off all around us... and God is saying: "*It is time to wake up, get up, dress up, and go out, and stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ.*" ... We cannot sleep.

So many people come to church on Sunday morning all across this nation of ours and feel that they *have done God a favor*. You can almost read the

sign that's hanging around their neck: "*Please do not disturb.*" No!
Let an understanding of what is happening today ***jostle*** us!

Christians can ***not*** be indifferent to the reality of the Lord's return. We must not be **asleep** on the job. The word for "asleep" here in 1 Thes 5:6... is (*ka-thew-dōmen.*) ... This is not the same word that Paul used in the previous chapter when he used "*sleep*" as a euphemism for death. ***That*** Greek word was (*koimaō*). ... ***This*** word (*ka-thew-dōmen*) means spiritual lethargy and insensitivity. ... Christians are ***not*** to be lethargic and insensitive about the Lord's return!

If you are one of the many church-goers who are attempting to simply cruise along... placing your spiritual development on some sort of "auto-pilot"... not using your spiritual gifts to minister to others... than you are in defiance to this scripture! If you have some understanding that we are in the last days... but you remain "half-hearted" (or sluggish) about getting up ***every day*** and trying to discover what the jobs are... that God has for you (that day)... then you are turning your back on God.

In a nutshell... here is what it means to be awake: Every day... and all through the day (not just once)... I need to prayerfully ask: "*Lord... please show me where You are work and asking me to join You...*" And then do it! Be alert! Be awake! Live in light of His return!

Keeping with his contrasts... Paul pictures two groups of people. One group is drunk and asleep. The other group is sober and alert.

1 Thes 5:7-8

Because the Day of the Lord is quickly approaching... it is time to wake-up... clean-up... and dress-up. These verses tell us how we are to dress-up... and it is not just in street clothes. We have some armor to put on.

Our Christian life is a battle. We need to be prepared and fully engage ourselves. There is to be no sitting idly by. We need to get ready for combat ... and we have to protect ourselves. There are two areas that we need to guard. One is our heart. The other is our head.

Faith and love are to cover our heart. The way we are to live is to grow in faith. We need to get a bulldog grip on the eternal truths of God (the unshakeable... inerrant... infallible Word of God.) Get a lock on the promises and assurances of God. We are going to need it! And also grow in love. Grow in faith... and grow in love. Set your sights on being able to love others – no matter what they do (or how they treat you.) Love your friends and family more diligently. Love the lost. Love strangers with Christ's love. Grow in your expressing love to others.

That is the breastplate. But what about the helmet...? It is called “the hope of salvation.” ... You say: “*The hope of salvation? Pastor, I thought we know that we are saved.*” ... Well... “*Hope of salvation*” does not mean the hope that at last you will be saved from Hell. Paul knew that the Thessalonian believers were already saved from eternal damnation. (in 1 Thes. 1:4... Paul acknowledges that they were chosen by God)... and he was certain that he and they would meet Christ in the air (we saw this in 1 Thes. 4:17).... So what does it mean? ... Hope of salvation means “the hope that salvation gives to us.” ... What hope is that? What is Paul writing about? Specifically... what hope does salvation give to us...?

The very next word shows that Paul is about to answer that. Verse 9 begins with the word “*for*.” There is no other way to understand what this word “*for*” means... but that he is connecting the next thought with what he just said. You can just as easily substitute the word “because”. “*Because* God has not destined us for wrath...” The hope that salvation brings is... to obtain *deliverance* *from this wrath he has been discussing*.

1 Thes 5:9

We are not destined for wrath... but to obtain salvation *from it*... We are headed for securing “deliverance.” ... And please notice that Paul writes the phrase “*to obtain salvation*” in the *future* tense. This “obtaining of salvation” is (yet) in the future... just as the (very frightful) coming Day of the Lord is!

Every believer has *already obtained* *being declared righteous... declared not guilty... Our sentence to eternal damnation has been removed* (through faith in Jesus by His atoning work on the cross)... Paul is not writing about *that* salvation in this verse. *That* salvation is *past* tense. No! This speaks of a *future* salvation from a *future* day of wrath. ... [P A U S E] ...

Verse 9 is still part of the Apostle Paul’s “*US verses THEM*” contrast of the passage. THEY (the wicked) are destined for wrath... (they will finally get what they deserve)... but WE (who are persecuted for our faith) are destined for deliverance from it.

1 Thes 5:10

The word for “asleep” is the same word used in verse 6 (*ka-thew-dōmen*.) Remember - it means spiritual lethargy and insensitivity. ... So even sluggish believers will be delivered from the wrath... They will escape

God's wrath - whether they are watchful or not... They will be with the Lord forever... even though they will not have the same eternal rewards in Glory!

1 Thes 5:11

The apostle Paul doesn't conclude with a panicked warning: "*The end is near! Get ready for the Tribulation!*" Instead he urges his readers to build each other up with this good news! What good news? ... News that the wicked will be punished... but God has not appointed believers for His wrath (either in Hell or to a 7-year Tribulation.) Rather He has appointed us to be rescued and to live with Christ forever! ... **[P A U S E]** ...

Now...in light of Paul's encouraging but sobering words in 5:1-11 regarding the return of Christ... and the alarming conditions of our present world... let me share two pieces of counsel: one for the children of light... the other for the children of darkness.

First... to believers: *don't be indifferent because your future is secure.*

There's still work to be done today. We should do more than harbor a sense of anticipation. We should harness a sense of urgency. Our knowledge of prophecy must produce in us a desire to live for Christ... and a passion to rouse others from their spiritual slumber. ... I think that every person who knows about the future... and has a balanced view of it... should be intensely concerned about their use of the time that remains.

I am asking you to get up every day... and engage yourself with what God has called you to BE and DO. ... I am asking you to be alert and sober. I am asking that we (as a church) will be asking God every day to show us where He is at work in this ever-darkening world... and then actively seek to join Him in it.

Jesus is coming! His return is imminent!

Second... to unbelievers: *don't be fooled because today seems calm*. The Bible is clear—there *is* a storm coming! And without Christ as your Savior... there's no escape. ... [P A U S E] ...

Chuck Swindoll retells a story from one of his mentors about a Long Island man who ordered an extremely sensitive barometer from a respected company:

When the instrument arrived at his home he was disappointed to discover that the indicating needle appeared to be stuck pointing to the sector marked "Hurricane." After shaking the barometer vigorously several times—never a good idea with a sensitive mechanism—the new owner wrote a scathing letter to the store and, on the following morning, on the way to his office in New York, mailed it. That evening he returned to Long Island to find not only the barometer missing but his house as well! The needle of the instrument had been pointed correctly. There was a hurricane.

Today you may feel like everything is wonderful... and is going your way. Your health is good... you have plenty in savings... and your life is very pleasant. ... But this doesn't change the fact that the needle of God's prophetic barometer is pointing on "Hurricane." ... There's a storm coming. It may come today. It may not come until next year. Perhaps it will be delayed further. ... But whether you face wrath in this world or in the world to come... Christ alone is the only one who can rescue you from the coming wrath.

Why not place all of your trust in Him... and His death on the cross to save you...?