



# 1 Thessalonians

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**But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.**

1 Thessalonians 5:4

The words, "But you," are given as a contrast to what has just been said in the previous verse. The world will say, "Peace and safety!" when there is actually only sudden destruction coming upon it. For them, there will be no escape. This is because, as he has already said, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. This then sets up the contrast. The night implies darkness, but for believers, they are "not in darkness."

The night and the darkness are words which are not literally speaking of night, but of the spiritual pall of immorality, ungodliness, false religion, etc. Believers have been converted by Christ, and this is no longer their state. Because of this, Paul continues that for believers this Day should not "overtake you as a thief." The word "Day" is speaking of the Day of the Lord of verse 2. It is the tribulation period. He then returns to the simile of the thief. As noted in a previous verse, Paul specifically states that the antichrist will not be revealed until the Restrainer is taken out of the way.

As the antichrist is the one to bring in the 7-year peace deal with Israel, then it is plainly obvious that the church will experience a pre- (not mid- or post-) tribulation rapture. To state otherwise, sets up several open contradictions in Paul's eschatological timeline. Further, it then logically contradicts what is known from the book of Revelation.

The greater part of the tribulation saints will certainly, and logically come from the first half of tribulation period. Maybe they will be converted and believe because of the rapture, or maybe because of the 144,000 who are sealed and who testify to what will happen. For whatever reason, they will refuse the mark of the beast.

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It would make no sense to have to face the choice of taking the mark when one is already saved, which would be the case if a mid- or post-tribulation rapture were true. It would be like saying, "You now have to work to be saved." That isn't grace at all. The world will already be set up where nobody is able to buy or sell. Only in the second half will the truly greater part of the devastation take place. In the first half of the tribulation, the peace deal has been made; the second half is where things devolve.

If one thinks it through logically, it is not at the second half of the tribulation, but during the first half that the tribulation saints will refuse to join in the world system which has been realized. The words of Revelation state that there is a "great multitude" who will come out of the "great tribulation." Those who endure the events of the second half of the tribulation period will, for the most part, be those who have taken the mark of the beast. Some who have not done so will survive through the entire period and enter the millennium, but logically, they will be in the minority.

Finally, Paul's words of this verse that we are "not of darkness" cannot be used to justify that we are able to pinpoint the day of the rapture. This is not saying that we are going to be enlightened to these things. Rather, it is speaking of our spiritual state, not an ability to divine what the Lord has already told us is something we are not to know.

Life application: Believers have a surety which is wonderful. The world is going to go through seven years of immense suffering, all of which will come about after the signing of a peace deal between Israel and her enemies. But this will not occur until after the rapture of the church. To go through half, or all, of that time of suffering would mean that we would have to earn our salvation. Something which no other generation of believers has had to do. It would negate the grace which we have been bestowed. Hold fast to the surety that we are not destined for wrath, but for salvation from this terrible time which lies ahead.

**You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.**

1 Thessalonians 5:5

In verse 2, Paul said that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. In verse 4, he said that believers are not in darkness concerning the coming of this predetermined Day. Now to bolster that, he says, "You are all sons of the light and sons of the day." The words are written to all believers at Thessalonica (and are thus inclusive of all believers in Christ at all times and in all places). There are no divisions, there are no exclusions. Any and all who are in Christ are termed "sons of light and sons of the day."

The word "light" is used to contrast the "darkness" of verse 4, and the word "day" is used to contrast "the night" of verse 2. The terms are Hebraisms which means "belonging to." As we

belong to the light and to the day, our lives are open and evident to the Lord. We have confessed our need for Christ. The contrast is to those who have not. In order to show this, he then says, “We are not of the night nor of the darkness.”

This is the world in general. All people who have not come to Christ have concealed their need for Him. Their dark deeds are hidden, but they will be exposed. Their walk is one of spiritual death rather than renewed life.

What Paul has done in these first verses of chapter 5 is move from the specific, such as “Day of the Lord,” to the general, such as “sons of the day.” The “Day of the Lord” is that time which will expose all darkness and all wickedness. Paul speaks in this same general form in Romans 13 as well –

“And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.” -Romans 13:11-14

As you can see, we are positionally already sons of the day and of the light, but we still have the choice (as seen in the Romans passage) to act in a manner contrary to that position. This will be seen as the chapter continues to unfold as well. Because we have gone from darkness to light, we should live as if it is the case, not pursuing deeds of darkness and immorality. Should we not do so, there will be a loss of rewards at the coming of the Lord.

This is confirmed by the use of the preposition “in” in verse 4 (believers are not “in” darkness), and then the use of the genitive form of the noun in verse 5 – (believers are not “of” darkness). Being “in” speaks of the state one is in, whereas being “of” points to the nature and origin of the state. Believers can be “in” darkness while not be “of” darkness. In the case of the day of the Lord, those at Thessalonica are neither in nor of. This is true with all who have been instructed in this particular doctrine. However, when we are not instructed in certain doctrines, we remain “in” darkness even though we have been brought out “of” darkness. This is a call and a challenge to read, know, and apply the word of God to our lives.

Life application: You have been called into Christ’s marvelous light. This came about by a freewill decision to leave the life you once knew. Why would you want to go back to the life you realized you wanted to once get away from? Stand fast in Christ, walk in the light, and be a true son of the day.