

# 1 Thessalonians 5 (Part 1): 1-11 • The Day of the Lord

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier  
Calvary Chapel Ontario

All right, we're in Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. So open your Bibles there, please. This probably won't surprise any of you at all to know that there has been an increased interest in people's lives to understand last day's events with everything that's been going on since the first of the year.

My Revelation study online has just absolutely blown up. I recorded it quite a long time ago. So people write to me and ask me questions, they're like, well, how does this work? And I'm like, I'm going to go back and look at it again because I forgot. But it's just huge, the number of people who are kind of asking the question, so where does all this fit? And what's next on the prophetic calendar?

And last week we had the opportunity to talk about the catching away of the church that Paul talked about there at the end of 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, where he talks about the fact that we will all be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. And I hope you were able to hear that message last week. It's very encouraging. If you missed it, it's on our website, just go there and you can catch up there. But the rapture, or the catching away, whatever you want to call it, is a delightful thing for us to kind of talk about.

But now as we get into 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, Paul is going to talk about something that is a little less fun to think about as it relates to the day of the Lord. But it also is kind of a, it doesn't apply as much to you, to be completely honest with you as believers, and we're going to see that. So let's go ahead and read through the first 11 verses of chapter 5 and then we'll pray and then we'll get into this here today. It says,

*“<sup>1</sup>Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. <sup>2</sup>For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup>While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. <sup>4</sup>But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup>For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. <sup>6</sup>So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. <sup>7</sup>For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at*

*night. <sup>8</sup> But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. <sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” (ESV)*

Stop there. Let's pray. Lord, we come to you completely dependent upon the work of your Spirit among us to open our eyes, open our hearts. Help us to see what these verses are saying. We pray that you would guide and direct our hearts to really, truly assimilate the truths that are laid out for us in this passage. Guide and direct us through your Spirit into truth. We pray in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

So we talked about the rapture last week, the catching away of the church. But now, as we get into the fifth chapter of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, he issues a sober warning that there's going to be another side to this whole time period, and you can tell from reading these first 11 verses that Paul had obviously taken the time to speak to the people there in Thessalonica about these matters because he begins by telling them you don't have any need of anyone writing to you about this.

And the rest of us who weren't there in Thessalonica are kind of going, no, tell us again. Just say it again. It would have been great to know exactly what he shared with the believers there that he tells them they have no need hearing about again.

But interestingly enough, Paul says enough in these verses for us to gain some important insight into this period of time that is called the day of the Lord. And you'll notice that is one of the first things that Paul makes reference to, the day of the Lord, the day of the Lord. First thing you need to understand about the day of the Lord is that it's not just a single day.

We refer to a day usually, in the context of a 24-hour period of time, but the day of the Lord covers actually biblically a long period of days, and they are yet futures when God will bring about some pretty incredible, pretty powerful, pretty dramatic sort of events in the course of mankind's history. And the day of the Lord includes such things as the catching away of the church. It includes the Great Tribulation, and we know that covers a seven-year period of time. It includes the second coming of Jesus to the earth, which we know happens at the very tail end of the Great Tribulation, and it also includes a time of judgment that happens after that as well.

So you can see that the day of the Lord is actually a protracted period of time, and you can also tell that when Paul makes reference to the events that he covers in this part of 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, largely he's talking about things that are happening to unbelievers. How do we know that? It's because of the pronouns that are used. Whenever Paul's talking about what's happening to the church, he uses pronouns like we and us. And when he talks about things that are happening to unbelievers and not happening to the church, he uses pronouns like they and them, okay?

Now, all you got to do is just kind of pay attention as you're reading through these passages, and we'll do our best to point out these pronouns again as we go over these verses. But you can tell who he's talking about. He's obviously talking to the church, but he's talking about sometimes unbelievers in these verses.

Now, verse 1, if you look with me again, Paul begins by saying, “*Now concerning the times and the seasons...*” And I'll have you stop there because that's the 1st phrase that we need to kind of take note of here because it's an interesting one and it has significant meaning. 'Times' in the Greek is the word 'chronos,' where we get our word 'chronology,' which means the passage of time and essentially the Greek word here speaks of the duration of time, whether it's a long time or a short time or whether it's a near time or a far-off time. And we know that Paul taught that as far as timing goes, that these things were imminent, at least the coming of the Lord for the church.

And even though we don't know the exact time, we know that it is imminent, meaning that it could happen at any time. You'll remember in Matthew 24, Jesus said, “*Concerning the day and the hour (remember he said), no man knows the day nor the hour, not the angels in heaven, nor the son, but only the father.*” That's recorded for us in Matthew 24. But we know that the coming of Jesus for his church could happen at any time. Again, that is what is imminent, and imminent means at any moment.

All right, now the word ‘seasons’ speaks of the characteristics of a time period. The New American Standard Bible uses the word “epoch,” which is kind of an interesting—I prefer ‘seasons’ better, but when you think of an epoch, you might say, well, the biggest epoch in the life of our newborn son was probably when he started walking at 12 months. So an epoch is usually a significant sort of event that is notable.

But when we think of the word as ‘season,’ as it's used here in the ESV, you can think of seasons. I hope to God that we're in a season of this coronavirus junk. I mean, I hope this is a season, right? But we talk about that, we talk about a

season of awakening or revival. We look back over the history of the United States of America and other parts of the world and we say, well, that was a season where God was doing an incredible work of reviving men's hearts.

We talk about seasons of judgment. We talk about seasons of blessing. Sometimes people come up to me and say, Pastor, our family is going through a real season of trial right now. And, of course, the idea is that they're describing the characteristics of the time period that they are in. It is characterized by blessing, trial, revival, awakening, whatever it might be.

And it's interesting that God gives some people insights into understanding times and seasons. I want to give you an example here in just a moment. But there was a time period back when David was taking over the kingdom after King Saul died, you'll remember. And it took years actually for the whole kingdom of Israel to come under his rulership as king.

But eventually, different factions or groups of Israelites began to come alongside David and support him. And in the book of Chronicles, it talks about the different groups, basically from the different tribes that came to David. And it says something very interesting about the descendants of Issachar. Let me show you this on the screen from 1 Chronicles chapter 12. It says,

**1 Chronicles 12:32 (ESV)**

*Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command.*

"Of Issachar (it says that there were), *men who had understanding of the times* (they understood the times), *to know what Israel ought to do* (and then it goes on to say of those men, there were) *200 chiefs, and* (then) *all their kinsmen* (that were) *under their command.*"

Any great number of men we don't know. But they had a sense of understanding. They knew that they knew, this is David's time. This is time for David to be king, that's why we're going to do this, it's time, right? They had a sense of the time. And so there are people that have just a sense of the time. It's time. And you'll hear people talking sometimes about the coming of the Lord. They'll say, well, it's got to be close.

Now, on the other hand, the Lord criticized his own people for not recognizing the signs of the times. Do you remember that? Let me show you this passage also online from Matthew 16. He says,

**Matthew 16:3 (ESV)**

*You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.*

You can look at it and say, there's going to be rain or it's going to be nice weather tomorrow or whatever. But after all the prophetic insights that your heavenly Father has given you over the years as the Jewish people to recognize the coming of Messiah, you missed it. You couldn't even recognize the signs of the times that you're in. And so they were kind of admonished for not paying attention and so forth.

So, again, if you look with me in verse 1, Paul says, “*Concerning these times and seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves (verse 2) are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.*”

That's the first characteristic that Paul gives us here about this whole period of time called the day of the Lord. He says, “*It'll come like a thief in the night.*” Now, don't assume from that, it means it's going to happen at night. The phrase, ‘a thief in the night,’ is just simply meant to pass along the idea that it's going to come unexpectedly. It can't come at night for everybody because if it's at night in one place, it's going to be day somewhere else, right? And it's going to be a global event when these things take place. So ‘a thief in the night’ means they're not going to know, people are going to be unaware from that standpoint.

Paul goes on to give us even more insights in verse 3 when he says, “*While people are saying, “There's peace and security,” (that's interesting) then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*”

Speaking of labor pains, I texted between services, I texted the wife of the Pastor up at Calvary Chapel Baker City, Megan. Her due date is like today. And so I just texted her quickly between service and said, you got any baby action? She said, no, but I did read a verse about labor pains today coming upon us suddenly. I thought, that's right where we are, right? So she's wondering if that's kind of a word from the Lord for her for today. I said, well, keep us posted.

But anyway Paul gives some interesting insights as to the season that will usher in the day of the Lord and we'll talk about what that characteristic is, but do you know who he's referring to? Who's going to experience these things? Did you see what he said there in verse 3? Did you notice the pronouns?

Let me read it again: “*While people are saying, “There's peace and safety,” then sudden destruction will come on us.*” That's not what he says, does he? He says, “*...sudden destruction will come on them...*” And then he goes on to say, “*...as labor pains upon a pregnant woman, we will not escape.*” He doesn't say, we. He says, they. He's not referring to the church to whom he is writing, in other words, believers. He is referring to unbelievers. So he says, the day of the

Lord will come upon them, and the destruction that happens will come upon them, and they will not escape.

But did you notice also that right before the day of the Lord, people are going to be saying peace and security? Now, do you hear people saying that right now? I sure don't. It's not happening right at this minute, is it? People are not saying peace. They're not saying security. We have a world that is actually in upheaval, right now, right?

So we know that right before this thing happens, the day of the Lord, there's going to be a sense of peace. People, at least people will be saying peace and security. It's interesting, the word 'peace' in the Greek means a complete absence of alarm. Interesting, huh? And then the word 'security,' or your Bible may say, 'safety,' it refers to a sense of blind safety or blind security. In other words, hinting at the fact that this is all kind of unreal, that it is not genuine, but people will be saying peace and security. And that means that the unbelievers living on the earth will have no idea at that time what is lurking and just about to pounce. And what makes the people believe that there's going to be a time of peace and security?

Well, we believe that the book of Daniel actually gives us some insight into that time period. And this may suggest that we as the church will be around to see the very, very beginning of the day of the Lord coming to pass. But in Daniel chapter 9, let me show you a passage here.

**Daniel 9:27 (ESV)**

*"...he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week..."*

It speaks of 'he,' and that he is the Antichrist, all right? It says, "... *he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week...*" And the one week, which is made up of seven days, is poetically speaking of seven years. So what we know from this passage is that the Antichrist will sign a seven-year contract, peace contract with many in the world.

But then we know also from Daniel that halfway through that seven-year period of time, he will renege on the contract, and things will go very bad very quickly. Not only will he set up his image at that time and demand to be worshiped as God, but the wrath of God will begin to be poured out upon the earth at that time in earnest.

So, it's going to be a terrible time. But I believe that it is this contract with the Antichrist that will lull people into a false sense of security that Paul refers to here in 1 Thessalonians. But it will be a false sense, and it will literally be like labor pains coming upon a woman suddenly, and sudden destruction will follow.

Now, please notice as we get into verse 4 that Paul changes the pronoun. Verse 4, he says, "*But you* (that's the church now, we're talking to believers) *are not in darkness, brothers...*" He uses the word 'brothers,' and that could be translated brethren, and that is a really a generic reference for the body of Christ. He says, "...for that day to surprise you like a thief."

Alright, he says, "*That day*" - now he's talking about the day of the Lord. He says, "*That day is not going to surprise you like a thief.*" And the reason is that Paul had told them to expect the coming of the Lord at any time. If you have a working knowledge that somebody's going to break into your house, you're going to prepare.

I always use that dumb example of Home Alone, the movie, the dumb Christmas movie, where little Kevin overhears these two bumbling thieves planning to hit the house at a particular time that very evening. And he knows he's got so much time. So what does he do? He's prepared for them, right? We watch this stupid movie every Christmas. I don't know why, but I can't believe that movie has become like a Christmas classic, but it has. Anyway, I guess it's because it has Christmas music in it, and it was done around Christmas.

But when you know that somebody's coming to break into your home, you prepare, you would be prepared to meet them. So what Paul is saying is that day is not going to surprise you because you know He's coming. This is the part where for us, the day of the Lord is imminent because the first thing that's going to happen in the day of the Lord is the catching away of the church. And we don't know the day. We don't know the hour. We just know He's coming. And so we're told, be ready. Be ready for His coming. Well, when He comes, what are we going to do? We're going to go, hey, we were expecting you. We didn't know when, but we knew you were coming. Great, it's a wonderful thing. So he says, it's not going to surprise you.

And then he explains a little bit more of why, in verse 4, he says, "*You are not in darkness.*" That means you have knowledge. You understand. You know. You know what to expect concerning these last day's events. You're not sitting around going, I wonder what's going to happen.

As the church, you know what's going to happen. He told you what's going to happen right here in the Bible. You know, you're not in darkness. You've been brought into the light on this thing. In fact, he goes on to say on verse 5, "*For you are all children of light, children of the day.*" You're a child of the light. Did you know that? Do you ever think of yourself as a child of the light? It's okay to say that because that's what you are.

Think about that for a minute, I'm a child of the light. Huh. I'm a child of the light. I mean, I suppose there's implications to that, you imagine? Such as, I don't belong in the darkness. I'm a child of the light. I'm a child of the day. Yeah. God has shared things with me. And some of your Bibles may actually say a son of light instead of child of the light.

In the semitic languages, whenever they would say "son of something," it would always mean that you bore a characteristic of that thing. In other words, it defines you. Do you know Barnabas meant "son of encouragement"? That was what his name means, and they called him that because he was an encourager. You are a son of encouragement. You are a son or a child of light. You are of the light. It is what defines you, and that's an important thing to remember.

So, he goes on and talks about the fact that we are children of the light, and we are not of the night. We are children of the light and not of the night. You've got to say that just right, or of the darkness. Do you remember what Jesus promised us related to that? Let me show you this from the book of John, Chapter 8, verse 12:

**John 8:12 (ESV)**

*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

*"Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am (first of all) the light of the world (but then here's a promise). Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

Have you ever noticed that people who are in the world and don't know Christ are just kind of bumbling around in the darkness? And they really can't see to know where they're going. And they stumble all over the place. But you and I, by just the goodness of God, have been given the light of life. Because He is the light of life. What a cool thing.

So Paul continues verse 6: *"So then let us not sleep, as others do..."* And 'sleep' is used here as a metaphor for walking in the ignorance of the times and seasons, the lack of readiness. He says, *"...let's not sleep, as others do, but (he says) let us keep awake (let's be alert) and be sober."* And by the way, that word 'sober' means clear-minded, and it doesn't necessarily mean 'let's not drink.' Obviously drinking will do the opposite, it will not make you sober. If you drink a lot, it will make you cloudy in your mind, but it could be way more than drink or drugs or even smoking weed, for that matter.

As an aside, I happen to believe the legalization of marijuana in our state is a very specific work of the enemy to keep people's minds cloudy. I do, with all my heart. And I know that the enemy knows that his time is just about done.



And he's doing everything he can to keep people's minds cloudy because we are called to be alert. We're called to be sober-minded, clear-minded, so that we can pray and so we can know the things that are happening in the scriptures.

But there's frankly a lot of other things that can cloud your mind that don't have anything to do with chemicals or things you put into your body. Your mind can be clouded by fear. Your mind can be clouded by drama that you're just not firing on all cylinders in terms of just your ability to pay attention and see what's going on.

So we have to be careful about those things. We have to be on the lookout against things that cloud our mind. Like I said, you might not take drugs, drink, smoke, or weed. Great. I applaud you for all those things. Doesn't mean that your mind is completely clear. Be careful. Be careful of the other things that can cloud our minds.

So Paul reminds us in verse 7: *“For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.”* And now he's using the metaphor of night to speak of that period of time when darkness reigns and people sleep and people get drunk, which is those times when they're just not aware, whether because they're drinking or whether they're just asleep. They're not aware of what's going on.

And that's why he goes on to repeat, and he says, *“But (in verse 8) since we belong to the day (that time of light), let us be sober (again, clear-minded), having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.”* So what Paul's doing here is he's using this image of kind of a sentry, a soldier, who's put up on the wall to watch out for an enemy that might be approaching. And these sentries were put there to stay alert and to call people to a place of readiness if there were the attack of an enemy or something like that.

And so he uses these pictures of this soldier and the essentials of his armor. And so what does he say is essential for you and I as we wait on the Lord? He says, what is essential for you and I is faith and love, and the hope of salvation. Think about those things, you guys, faith, faith in God. Don't let your faith in God wane. Don't let it deteriorate. How does faith deteriorate? Have you ever stopped to think about that? Have you ever asked that question? How does faith deteriorate?

Well, it happens several different ways. Number one, usually what happens is we go through a very difficult time or season in our lives, a time of great difficulty, pain. And you know how we respond to that time of difficulty? We back away from God's Word. We back away from fellowship. We don't read our

Bible as much sometimes because we're even disappointed with God. We're wondering, why is this happening? And so I'm kind of angry with God, and I don't really want to talk to Him right now, and I really don't want to hear from Him either. And so we back away. What happens to our faith? Begins to deteriorate. Why? Because faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word. If we are not in the path of God's Word, our faith will deteriorate. Period.

As you and I are waiting in these last days, as we are doing our best to keep our eyes on Jesus, we cannot afford to back away. We cannot afford to back away. And then we're also told that we have to hang on to love. We've got to hang on to it because it's going to be easy to let go of it in these last days. Jesus said that because of the lawlessness that will characterize the last days, He said, the love of many will grow cold. ( Matthew 24:12)

The love of many people is going to grow cold. They're going to stop caring. They're going to start just looking out for number one because of lawlessness, because of the way things are. It's like, you know what? You just got to take care of yourself these days. Nobody else is going to watch over my life, what I've got, my existence. I'm going to have to do it. The heck with them. And the love grows cold. Love for other people grows cold. And then our love for God follows suit. He says, you've got to hang on to it. You've got to protect it. It's like a breastplate. You've got to hang on to faith and love, but also the hope of salvation. Don't ever let go of the hope of your salvation. Keep that in the forefront.

Our hope is not in this life. Our hope is not in this world. Our hope is not in the things of this world. Our hope is not in whatever's coming down the pike in terms of this world. Our hope is in our salvation. Period. And when we get our eyes off that and start putting our hope in other things, we start getting into trouble. And we have to be very careful. So faith, hope, and love, don't leave home without them.

And then verse 9, once again, you'll notice he's been emphasizing the "we" and "they" references in the past few verses, but now notice he switches, he's back to us again. Verse 9, he says, "*For God has not destined us for wrath...*" And wrath is what the great tribulation is largely about. But I really love how Paul says we are not destined for that. We, the body of Christ, are not destined for wrath.

Why are we not destined for wrath? It was very simple, Jesus bore it for us already. He bore it for us. He bore the wrath of God. Do you understand? Jesus bore the wrath of God for you. He carried it. He consumed it. It enveloped him. It crushed him. But it was all for you. But it was the wrath of God.

There's this interesting word we come upon in the New Testament that I'm sure probably isn't in our daily vocabulary, but it's the word 'propitiation.' And it doesn't appear in all English translations. Some of them use the word 'atonement,' like the NIV, instead of 'propitiation.' But the ESV uses it. I think so does the New King James and so forth. Jesus, it says in the Bible, is our propitiation. (1 John 2:2) That's a fancy word that simply means this: He removed the wrath of God for us. It means to turn aside the wrath of God. The wrath has been turned aside for those who are in Christ, whose faith is in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, the wrath of God has been turned aside.

And now, so what can we say with the Apostle Paul? We are not destined for that. How could we be? If there was any wrath of God that was coming our way, it would mean that what Jesus did wasn't enough, right? It would mean what Jesus did wasn't good enough. But it was good enough. And he said it's finished. So for you and I, it's a done deal. So Paul can say this, "God has not destined us for wrath." What have we been destined for? To obtain salvation. To obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep. Now he's changing these metaphors. It's interesting when people mix metaphors; you have to kind of keep up with them.

Now he's talking about being alive or dead when he says 'awake or asleep.' He says, "... *that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.*" And then he ends this section of the chapter by saying, "<sup>11</sup> *Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*" And that's so important, isn't it? Build one another up, encourage one another.

I hope that every single person who walks out of Calvary Chapel Ontario, after I've gotten finished teaching the Word and after we've had worship, I hope that everybody can walk away saying, I'm encouraged. I hope so. I'm built up.

But I hope you also come not just to be built up but to build up others because that is the exhortation of this final verse: 'Build one another, encourage one another.' And he even says about the Thessalonians, "*Just as you are doing.*" They were actively thinking about how they could encourage and build one another up. And he says, I want you guys to do it more and more, do it more. And we need it because of all the physical and spiritual battles that rage around us every single day.

There's somebody in here in this room, and we're even limited to how many we have in our room. There are also people watching live right now. But of all the people that are part of this service today, there's somebody here, and I don't have to be a prophet to know this, who's going through a hard time. I mean, who's going through a really hard time. And they probably had to even work

hard to get themselves here today, so that they could just sit and hear the Word of God. Somebody needs your encouragement. Somebody needs you to perhaps pray with them, to encourage them, and say, hey, keep your eyes on Jesus, man. It's going to be soon. Hang in there. Don't let your faith get beat up. Keep growing in Jesus.

We went through a period of about 12 weeks here at Calvary Chapel where we didn't have anybody in this auditorium except a couple of people in the booth. And I was sitting here teaching to a camera. Let me tell you something, I'm glad to have just a few people. I was so glad when we started having people come back. It was so fun to have human beings again, sitting in the chairs and not looking at empty chairs.

I remember the first time we did an online-only service, I told a joke. Man, I never did that again. It went nowhere. I mean, nobody, I think my wife in the back row went, huh, or something, because she's heard them all. So, nobody laughed. What a drag. No, but we need each other. We need to be actively encouraged.

I know that some of you guys are going through some very discouraging times, and some of you guys have really had your faith kicked around. Your faith has been kicked around, and you feel it. And we need each other. We need to be together as the body of Christ, loving on each other. And even if it's just a word of encouragement, hey, I'm praying for you, man. I'm praying for you. Or when you see somebody who is hurting, how can I pray for you? How can I lift you before the Lord? Oh, do we need that? Of course we do!

He says, therefore, encourage one another, build one another up. That word means edify, edify one another as you are doing. Let's not stop. Amen.