

7. The day of the Lord and the practical commands

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In this final chapter of 1 Thessalonians we see the Christian's actions in view of the return of Christ. In chapter 1, as you recall, we have learned the Christian's attitude toward the return of Christ. Now, if the attitude does not lead to action, something is radically wrong.

That Day of the Lord begins with night because that is God's way of marking time. He begins that way in Genesis where it says that the evening and the morning were the first day. God begins in night but moves to light. So the Great Tribulation leads into the glorious millennial reign of Christ.

Initially, it is important to understand that our curiosity about prophecy and the future is God-given. According to Solomon's Ecclesiastes 3:11, the Lord has placed eternity in our hearts. He has created us with a hunger that only His truth can satisfy. God's complete plan for the ages is always just beyond our reach.

We are in danger when we begin speculating about aspects of prophecy that are supposed to be unclear. Those who leave little room for mystery leave lots of room for mistakes.

A. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE DAY OF CHRIST AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

Some of you may already have noticed that there are a tremendous difference between the Day of Christ and the Day of the Lord. But for those who do not know about them, let me explain them to you.

1) The Day of Christ

This is the period connected with rewards and blessings of saints at the coming of Christ for His own – the Rapture. The expression occurs in 1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16. The Day of Christ is not the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is connected with the judgments for the non-believers.

2) The Day of the Lord

In chapter 5 of 1 Thessalonians, Apostle Paul continues comforting his readers, who, because of their hardships, also feared that the terrible Day of the Lord had begun.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

As we just have read, NKJV and KJV translate it as 'the Day of Christ'. But it should be translated as 'the Day of the Lord' like NIV, NASB and other versions.

This period of God's judgment, entailing horrible and inescapable affliction, will follow the Rapture and is known as the Tribulation. Paul tells them, "Don't worry! The Day of the Lord is coming, but it only concerns unbelievers, not believers."

The Day of the Lord as a visible manifestation of Christ upon the earth should be distinguished from the Day of Christ.

B. SURPRISE, SURPRISE, SURPRISE

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

The word for "time" is the Greek 'chronos', from which we get our English word 'chronology'. The times and seasons or the chronology is not for the church.

The Lord Jesus does not come to the church like a thief in the night. Even though we may not know the time or date of His rapture for the church, but the church is looking for and waiting for the Lord to come.

But the Lord Jesus does come like a thief to the world after the church has been raptured. As I have said, the Day of the Lord will come suddenly to the earth, and it will begin with the night of the Great Tribulation Period. Then finally Christ will come back personally to this earth with His saints from heaven.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

Did you notice the change of pronouns here? The pronouns were "brethren," and "you" in the first two verses are changing to "they." Paul now refers to unbelievers who remain on earth after the Rapture. Glad that the Christian influence is finally gone, they will follow the antichrist and his scheme to rule the world. I am sure that their banners and slogans will enthusiastically portray the dawning of a new day of "peace and safety." Then, with swift terror, destruction will come.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

Because unbelievers live in the darkness of spiritual ignorance, they are unaware of the disaster that awaits them. But Christians live in the light of truth.

The Rapture of the church actually does two things:

- 1) It ends this Day of Grace in which people are calling out His name and bringing many people to glory.
- 2) It begins the Day of the Lord. The Great Tribulation will get under way when the church leaves the earth.

It closes one day and opens another.

C. BE READY, BE SOBER FROM THE WORLD

1 Thessalonians 5:6-8 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

A lot of people get drunk on power or on the making of money or on the pleasures of this world. The child of God is to stay sober and is to watch. Why? Because it is extremely easy for any Christian to fall into the traps of satan who tries his best to ensnare us.

I see this often some born-again Christians who set their five year goal to be something, or making money that they forget God. It even happens to some churches which get into a building project so much that they forget that the church is supposed

to do. Their priorities get all blurred that they choose not to see God's direction. They are not sober-minded.

To be sober-minded means to be alert, to live with your eyes open, to be sane and steady. To make the contrast more vivid, Paul pictured two groups of people: one group was drunk and asleep, while the other group was awake and alert. Danger was coming, but the drunken sleepers were unaware of it. They are like drunken men, living in a false paradise and enjoying a false security.

Hope of salvation means "the hope that salvation gives to us." There are actually three tenses to salvation:

- 1) Past – I have been saved from the guilt and penalty of sin – Justification
- 2) Present – I am being saved from the power and pollution of sin – Sanctification
- 3) Future – I shall be saved from the very presence of sin when I get to heaven. – Glorification

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

This is another evidence of Pre-Tribulation doctrine. Yes, Christians have always gone through tribulation, since this is a part of dedicated Christian living. But they will not go through the Tribulation wrath of God that is appointed for the godless world.

Mormon people believe that they would go through the Tribulation of some sort. That is why they always have emergency foods, hide-out shelter and weapons ready in their homes.

As you all know, at the end of each teaching I do, I try to sum up what I've taught in applications for you to take homes and workplaces. For some applications I have to dig them out, some in plain sight. This is the case in point.

D. APPLICATIONS

From v11 to v27, we find 22 commands from Apostle Paul in rapid firing mode. They are perfect commands for us to follow to be alert and sober-minded for holy living in this unruly and lost world.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

1) Comfort each other

Paul tells us not to take comfort, but to give comfort. If all Christians have a heart to comfort each other, then everyone will be comforted.

2) Edify one another

To edify means to build up. The idea is of a church full of active participants to build up each other, not just themselves. That means people have to get involved.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

3) Recognize those who labor among you

4) Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake

God has ordained leadership for the local church. It is true that we are "all one in Christ Jesus." Just as the flock needs a shepherd, so the local church needs a leader. They are God's appointees to the church. They have spiritual authority from the Lord and people should accept them in the Lord. They are not dictators, but leaders and examples. As they follow the Lord, we must follow them.

5) Be at peace among yourselves

With this simple command Paul said Christians should simply put away all their squabbles and arguments. I've seen enough of this already in my 19 years in the Lord, but I am sure that there will be more to see.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. 15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

6) Warn those who are unruly

The unruly are those who are out of order, using a military term that describes the soldier that breaks ranks or marches out of step. This is the self-willed person who simply demands to hold their own opinion or preference. These must be warned.

7) Comfort the fainthearted

8) Uphold the weak

By nature or experience they tend to be timid and lack courage. These need comfort – in the sense of assisting strength – to be brought to them.

9) Be patient with all

Just because somebody like something different than our tastes, as long as it is not going over to the Christian main doctrines, let it be the differences in personal preferences.

10) See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone

The Christian never should seek revenge, but let God take up our side. Revenge has nothing to do with self-defense or being a soldier or police officer.

11) Always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

It is so much easy for us to look for bad things from others who are different than us. It takes a great deal of efforts to see good things from others. If you are a type who criticize others more than see good in them, this command is for you.

You may say, "I don't criticize them. I just state the facts." If that is the case, how would you like God to state facts about you? I don't want Him to do so about me. There are a way to many bad things about me.

Instead of criticizing, look for something good in that person. You will be surprised how much you start to like that person.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies. 21 Test all things; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

12) Rejoice always

Not only rejoicing in happy things, but in sorrows also. The Christian can rejoice always because their joy isn't based in circumstances, but in God. Circumstances change, but God doesn't.

13) Pray without ceasing

We can't bow our heads, close our eyes, and fold our hands without ceasing, but those are postures of prayer, not prayer itself. Prayer is communication with God, and we can live each minute of the day in a constant, flowing, conversation with God.

14) In everything give thanks

We don't give thanks for everything, but in everything. We recognize God's sovereign hand is in charge, and not blind fate or chance.

15) Do not quench the Spirit

We can quench the fire of the Spirit by our doubt, our indifference, our rejection of Him, or by the distraction of others. This has nothing to do with somebody is told to drawing attention to themselves by exercising the spiritual gifts without following the guidelines from the Word. That is a sure way to quench the Spirit.

16) Do not despise prophecies

It is very possible that prophesy was being despised because individuals were abusing the gift. We recognize that the Lord speaks to and through His people today, and we learn to be open to His voice. Of course, we always test prophecies against the Bible, but we do not despise prophecies.

17) Test all things

Evil and deception can show itself even in a spiritual setting, so it is important for Christians to test all things against the Word of God.

18) Hold fast what is good

19) Abstain from every form of evil

We have to question ourselves for our pastimes and amusements. If there is any question in our minds whether something is right or wrong, then it is wrong for us. We all need to abstain from all appearance of evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. 25 Brethren, pray for us. 26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. 27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

20) Be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

This is the way of our lives should be. No one should blame us to be unpure and unholy as we wait and watch and pray for His coming to get us.

21) Greet all brethren with a holy kiss

This is about having close fellowship with other believers in the Lord. I am sure that you all have seen the Middle Eastern people kiss each others on the cheek. Good hugs and firm handshakes will do here in America, since there are too many yoyos.

22) This epistle be read to all the holy brethren

There is no other way to get to know our Lord other than reading and studying the Word of God.