



## Instructions Concerning the Day of the Lord 1 Thessalonians 5

### Introduction

In Chapter 4, Paul addressed the Thessalonians' concern about their Christian friends and family members who had died. They were grieving for those who were gone and were concerned that they had missed Christ's return. What would happen to them now? Paul answered with words of comfort and encouragement: at Christ's coming there will be a glorious reunion of all believers with the Lord. *The dead in Christ will rise first (4:16)*. Then all living believers will be *caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (4:17)*, the "ultimate reunion".

In Chapter 5, Paul continues to write about that day, but now turns to answer some concerns the Thessalonians had about themselves. They wanted to be ready at the coming of Christ so they could stand before Him with confidence. From Paul's answer, it seems they thought that knowing the time of His return would prepare them for that great event. Paul quickly sets them straight.

Paul writes plainly to the Thessalonians about the *day of the Lord* (5:2). F.F. Bruce defines this day as "the day of Christ's revelation in glory, when He comes to vindicate His people and judge the world in righteousness" (World Biblical Commentary, 1 & 2 Thessalonians). The day of the Lord will be a day of judgment (Amos 5:18:20; Isaiah 13:6-16; Joel 1:15) and also a day of salvation (Obadiah 15-21; Zechariah 14). It will be the time of the end (Revelation 16:14). Previously, Paul had written about the blessings of salvation connected with Christ's coming on that day, but now he writes of the judgment that will also take place. It is important to know and understand both aspects of the day of the Lord.

### Outline of 1 Thessalonians 5

- I. The Day of the Lord - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
- II. The Spirit-filled Life - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22
- III. Closing Prayer and Greetings - 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

#### I. The Day of the Lord - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Paul asserts that he has no need to write concerning the timing of the *day of the Lord* (5:2) and he has two good reasons for this. Jesus had given his apostles a similar answer in Acts 1:6 when they asked about the time of the restoration of the kingdom. His answer was, *it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority*. There was (and

is) no need to know "times and seasons" for the simple reason that no one knows. *Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only* (Matthew 24:36). Clearly, the time of the end is not a question for believers to dwell upon. Secondly, the day of the Lord is apparently something Paul had taught about when he was present with the Thessalonians. What he is about to say, they already *know perfectly* (5:2): Christ's coming will be unexpected, sudden, and unavoidable. He encourages the Thessalonians, as believers, they can and must be prepared.

#### A. Unexpected - 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

Paul writes that the day of the Lord will come *as a thief in the night*. When a robbery occurs, everyone is taken by surprise. Thieves do not send out an announcement of the day and hour they will come. Nor do they normally arrive in broad daylight when people are awake. They sneak into the house in the dark of night when everyone is sleeping. In the same way, Christ will come unexpectedly when people are asleep (see 5:6-7), meaning that they are feeling safe and secure in their godless lifestyle.

#### B. Sudden - 1 Thessalonians 5:3

People will be complacent in what they perceive as peace and security. In the Old Testament, false prophets forecast peace and security in spite of the fact that God's judgment was looming on the horizon. There will be similar delusion just before the day of the Lord. As the sinful world comforts itself with false hopes, suddenly judgment will come just as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin suddenly, without warning.

#### C. Unavoidable - 1 Thessalonians 5:3

When a woman is pregnant, she knows that labor pains are inevitable. There is no way to escape them. They are the sign that the pregnancy will soon be over and the baby will be born. Christ's coming is also inevitable and judgment is unavoidable for those who reject the truth and delude themselves with thoughts of *peace and safety*. *They shall not escape*.

#### D. Contrast Between Believers and Non-believers - 1 Thessalonians 5:4-7

Paul makes the important point that believers will not be caught unaware. Nor will they be overcome by the destruction.

1. Believers are *sons of light* - 5:4-5

While unbelievers dwell *in darkness*, believers *walk in the light* (see Ephesians 5:8; 1 Peter 1:29; 1 John 1:6) and are *sons of the day*.

The concepts of darkness and light are found in the very first verses of Genesis. *Darkness was on the face of the deep....Then God said, Let there be light and there was light* (Genesis 1:2-3). Throughout the Bible, the word “darkness” evokes everything that is wicked and opposes God. Darkness also embraces judgment and death. Without light, the world is in darkness and chaos. Light, as the first work of creation in a world of darkness, evokes divine goodness. *And God saw the light, that it was good* (Genesis 1:4).

The Scriptures speak of Christ as the light and bringing light into a dark world. Isaiah prophesied, *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined* (9:2). Matthew applies this prophecy to Jesus in Matthew 4:14-16. Prior to that, the prophet Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied, *Through the tender mercy of God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death* (Luke 1:78-79).

Christ brought light into a spiritually dark world. John 1:4 states, *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men*. At the same time, the world remains in darkness because, *The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it* (John 1:5). The apostle John also wrote, *The darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining* (1 John 2:8). Unbelievers still live in the darkness. But those who belong to Christ have been *delivered from the power of darkness and conveyed into the kingdom of the Son of His love* (Colossians 1:13). Believers have been called *out of darkness into His marvelous light* (1 Peter 2:9).

## 2. Believers are awake and watching - 5:6-7

Paul’s point in verses 4 and 5 is that there are two kinds of people: those who are still in darkness and those who belong to the light. Do you belong to darkness or light? Are you asleep or awake (5:6)? Do you have the black-out shades pulled down in your heart or is the light of Christ shining in on you? If you have put your trust in God through the Lord Jesus Christ and His precious blood shed for you (1 Peter 1:18-19), you can be sure that He has delivered you from the power of darkness and brought you into the light.

Paul calls believers to, *Not sleep as others do. Watch and be sober*. George Eldon Ladd rightly says, “Believers are to ‘watch’ with reference to the day of the Lord. It

will be a surprise only for the world, which remains in darkness; Christians will be prepared, for they will not be asleep. The day of the Lord for the Church (the body of Christ) will mean salvation; for the world it will mean wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:8-9)” (The Blessed Hope).

## 3. Believers are soldiers of the day - 5:8

Those who are *sons of light* and *sons of the day* exhibit daytime behavior. They are soldiers of the cross, armed with faith, hope, and love. Paul has already praised the Thessalonians for these Christian virtues (1:3). He is now “encouraging them to become what they already are in Christ and to grow even more in Him. We are called to live out the reality of what Christ has done as we wait for the day of His return” (1 & 2 Thessalonians, The Hope of Salvation, James H. Grant Jr.).

4. Believers are appointed to *obtain salvation* - 5:9-10

The wrath of God will be poured out on unbelievers on the day of the Lord (2:16). However, those who believe are not appointed to wrath *but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ*. Paul has already stated in 1:10 that Jesus *delivers us from the wrath to come*. He died for us that we might live. Whether we die before Christ comes (*sleep*, 5:10) or are alive at His coming (*wake*, 5:10) we will ultimately *live together with Him*.

This is the hope and this is the truth with which Christians are to *comfort each other*. This is the same encouragement Paul gave in 4:18, but here he adds that we are also to *edify* (or “build up”) *one another*. In verses 12 through 22, he will expand upon this thought.

**II. The Spirit-filled Life - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22**

As Christians, it really matters how we live, both privately and in the public eye! The world is watching and fellow believers need our understanding, encouragement, and holy example. Paul exhorts the *brethren*, his brothers and sisters in Christ in Thessalonica, (and also you and those in your church) to live in a way that is pleasing to the Holy Spirit (5:19). This necessitates living by the power of the Spirit.

Paul gives instruction for Christian conduct toward church leaders, other church members, and in corporate worship.

A. Conduct Toward Church Leaders -  
1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

The word translated “*recognize*” is literally “know”- a word which has the connotation “to value”. Paul encourages Christians to know their church leaders well enough to value, respect, and love them for their

service to the church and to the Lord. "This combination of appreciation and affection will enable pastors and people to live in peace with each other" (The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians, John R. W. Stott). Paul mentions three aspects of the work of church leaders for which they are to be esteemed.

### 1. They labor among you - 5:12

The Greek word Paul uses for "labor" is "kopiao" which normally refers to manual labor. It means, "to toil, strive, and struggle to the point of exhaustion." Do you recognize the full worth of the "kopiao" done by your pastor and other church leaders? How do you show your appreciation?

### 2. They are over you in the Lord - 5:12

Church leaders are shepherds of the flock. They are overseers who take the responsibility for leading the flock in righteousness by their own example and by selfless servanthood, following the example of Christ. Paul has already written about this in 1 Thessalonians 2 and 3.

### 3. They admonish you - 5:12

Admonishing has to do with careful instruction in the truth of God's word, warning against wrong behavior, and applying gentle discipline when needed.

## B. Conduct Toward Church Members - 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15

As he has done before, Paul uses the word *brethren* in addressing the church. All believers are brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul calls us to *be patient with all*. The Greek word "makrothymia" (patience) is literally "long-suffering". It is an attribute of God (Psalm 86:15), a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), and an important aspect of love (Ephesians 5:22).

Members of each church congregation are responsible to care for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul calls us to *warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, and uphold the weak*. These are the ways Christians are to serve one another in sensitivity and love. Paul gives the exhortation to *always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all*. Does this describe you? What good can you do for a needy brother or sister in Christ this week?

## C. Christian Conduct in Corporate Worship - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

While at first glance this section appears to be a list of exhortations concerning personal attitudes and actions

in everyday life, it is actually first and foremost a guide for public worship. This is made clear by the fact that all the verbs in this section are plural. Paul is not referring to individuals, but to the congregation as a whole. Of course, we can certainly apply these exhortations to our lives outside the church environment and would surely benefit by doing so.

Here is Paul's prescription for a worship service that glorifies God according to His will (5:18).

### 1. Rejoice always - 5:16

In Philippians 4:4, Paul wrote, *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!* Certainly a congregation of believers rejoicing in the Lord is worship before God. The psalmist wrote, *Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation* (Psalm 95:1). Is your attitude one of rejoicing as you join other believers for worship?

### 2. Pray without ceasing - 5:17

Jesus taught His disciples, *Men always ought to pray and not lose heart* (Luke 18:1). He also taught them what we call "the Lord's Prayer" which is intended for corporate prayer (Luke 11:2-4). A part of every church service should be set aside as a time of prayer. A prayerful attitude throughout the service also glorifies God.

### 3. In everything give thanks - 5:18

Have you ever sat in a church service and grumbled about the music, the person sitting in front of you who is blocking your view, or the pastor's sermon? Have you ever repeatedly and impatiently looked at your watch, wanting to get home to watch a ball game, to go to the beach or a movie, or just to relax on your day off? The next time you feel like complaining, give thanks instead. Thank God that you are healthy and strong enough to be there in the first place. Thank Him for the worship team and for the pastors who selflessly give their time to serve God for your eternal benefit. Thank Him for the gift of life and for twenty-four precious hours in the day to serve and enjoy Him. Thank Him that your time and welfare are in His hands.

Thanklessness is a trait of unbelievers! See Romans 1:21. A church service is to be a time of unceasing thanks to God for His grace and mercy in redeeming us from darkness through His precious Son, Jesus Christ. In the early church, the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion, was called the Eucharist, which means "thanksgiving". "Indeed, the Christian life is to be an unceasing eucharist" (The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians, E. J. Bicknell).

4. *Do not quench the Spirit* - 5:19

The power of the Holy Spirit will be present in a church filled with joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. Sinful attitudes quench the Spirit.

5. *Do not despise prophecies* - 5:20-22

The early Christian prophets were an order of men especially inspired to reveal the will of God to others and who were sometimes charged with foretelling the future (Acts 11:27-28). More often, they conveyed an inspired message or teaching from God. Like the Old Testament prophets, they were to be role models of holiness, wisdom, and closeness to God. They proclaimed the sins of the people and called them back to the Lord. They reminded the people of God's faithfulness and called for faithfulness in return. They set the standards and the example of behavior for the community. "Authoritative messages from God through a well recognized spokesman for God, because of their origin, are not to be treated lightly. When God's word is preached or read, it is to be received with great seriousness" (The MacArthur Bible Commentary, John MacArthur).

Rather than criticize the proclamation of God's word, Paul says to *test all things*. Listen carefully, examine, and evaluate the teaching. *Hold fast what is good* but reject what is evil and not supported by Scripture. A shining example is the people of Berea where Paul preached after his visit to Thessalonica. The Book of Acts records that they were *fair minded* and that they *received the word with all readiness and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so* (17:11).

Do you enthusiastically embrace the preaching of the word? Do you listen intently and with discernment? Do you compare what you hear with the Scriptures?

### III. Closing Prayer and Greetings - 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

After giving heartfelt praise, comforting words, and commands for a life of growing faith, laboring love, and patient hope, Paul acknowledges the source of sanctification and fulfillment of all Christian hope. He does this with a brief prayer.

## A. Prayer - 1 Thessalonians 5:23-25

Paul prays for sanctification of the Thessalonian believers. God is the God of peace who through His mighty power sanctifies His people completely. He erases sin from our lives so we may stand before Him blameless on the day of Christ's return. He who has called us to holiness (4:7) will also perform it. We

can count on this because God is faithful. *If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself* (2 Timothy 2:13).

Having lovingly shared his heartfelt message with the Thessalonians, and having prayed for their sanctification, Paul humbly and quite simply asks for prayer for himself. It should not be beneath a pastor or any church leader to request prayer for himself or herself.

## B. Greetings - 1 Thessalonians 5:26-27

Paul asks that all the brethren be greeted *with a holy kiss*. The kiss was a social gesture, the acceptable friendly greeting in parts of the ancient world. Adding the word *holy* specified it as a Christian greeting. It was "the mark of oneness in Christ" (1 & 2 Thessalonians, I. Howard Marshall). Paul's desire was that those in the body of Christ should express their love and caring for one another in a tangible way. In what way do you express your love for those in the body of Christ? Marshall comments, "It is doubtful whether doing nothing at all, as modern western Christians tend to do, really fulfills the spirit of the injunction."

Paul's final charge is that his letter be read publicly to *all the holy brethren* to edify the entire congregation.

## C. God's Grace - 1 Thessalonians 5:28

The closing thought of the letter is *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Paul opened his letter with an invocation of grace and ends it in the same way. Grace is the heart of the gospel message Paul preached. In fact, without God's grace there would be no gospel. *May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*.

### Applications

1. In what way is God's grace with you and how has His grace impacted your life? How would your life be different without God's grace?
2. In what ways are you like the Berean believers to whom Paul had preached? Are you fair-minded when listening to a preacher? Do you search the Scriptures to determine that the message is in line with God's truth?
3. What will you do to help make your church a more loving and peaceful group of people?
4. How well do you know your pastor and the work that he does? What efforts will you make to get to know him better? Have you ever invited your pastor to dinner? If not, when will you do so? How can you encourage others to lovingly esteem your pastor and church leaders?
5. How often do you pray for your pastor and other Christian leaders?

## QUESTIONS

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

### DAY ONE: Read all lesson notes and references.

1. a. What did you learn about “*the day of the Lord*” that was new to you?  
  
b. What did you learn about your responsibility concerning “*the day of the Lord*”?
2. How did this lesson change your attitude toward your church leaders or your role in a church service?

### DAY TWO: Read 2 Thessalonians 1 and 2.

3. a. Give all references (chapter and verse) to “*the day of the Lord*”. Include “*that day*” and “*day of Christ*”. In each instance, what does Paul write about that day?  
  
b. Give all references (chapter and verse) to “*deception*” and “*delusion*”. What is Paul’s warning in each instance?
4. Find each verse that mentions the word “*grace*”. What does Paul write about grace in each passage?
5. What did you find in 2 Thessalonians 1 and 2 that was encouraging to you?

### DAY THREE: Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12.

6. a. Why was it fitting for Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to give thanks for the Thessalonians?  
  
b. What did their thankfulness lead them to do?  
  
c. What, specifically, did they boast about?
7. What did the Thessalonians’ endurance of persecutions and tribulations reveal about them?
8. a. Who would repay the Thessalonians for their afflictions?  
  
b. How would they be repaid? Give both positive and negative aspects with verses.  
Positive:  
  
Negative:

- c. When would these things happen?
  - d. From verse 10, what else will happen on that day?
  - e. How does this passage apply to you?
9. a. What did Paul and his fellow-workers pray for the Thessalonians? Give three points.
- b. How would these things be accomplished?
  - c. Which of these will you pray for yourself? Which will you pray for your fellow Bible students?

**DAY FOUR: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4.**

10. a. What will be Paul's subject in this chapter?
- b. Why did he feel a need to write about this?
  - c. Why were the Thessalonians "*shaken*" or "*troubled*" about this?
11. What must necessarily come to pass before the coming of Christ on "*that day*"?
12. List four things Paul says about "*the man of sin*".
13. Name people in the following passages who display any of the above characteristics (from question 12). Name the specific rebellious character traits each one displays.
- Genesis 3:4-7
- 2 Kings 17:21
- 1 Kings 21:24-26
- Isaiah 14:4 and 13-14
- Ezekiel 28:1-2
- Daniel 11:21-23 and 36-37
- 1 John 2:18, 22, and 2 John 1:7

**DAY FIVE: Read 2 Thessalonians 2:5-9.**

14. a. What, specifically, did Paul say the Thessalonians should “remember”? Use last week’s verses also.

b. What did the Thessalonians “know”?

c. What do you learn from this passage about “*what is restraining*”?

15. What do you learn about “*lawlessness*” and “*the lawless one*”?

16. a. List words or phrases Paul uses to describe “*the lawless one*” and his work.

b. Give words or phrases from Daniel 11:21-23, 31-40; Matthew 24:24; and Mark 13:22 which match Paul's description of “*the lawless one*”.

c. ? (Thought Question) What conclusions do you draw from these similarities?

**DAY SIX: Read 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 and Romans 1:18-25.**

17 a. Who will be deceived by “*the lawless one*”?

b. How will they be deceived?

c. Why will they be deceived? See also Romans 1:18-25.

18. a. What will be the fate of those who are deceived? Give verses.

b. ♥(Heart Question) Would you categorize yourself as a person who might be deceived? Why or why not?