

## 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

I have a **question** for you today. How will the **last** day of human history be like the **first** day of creation? What do they have in **common**? The answer I'm **looking** for is that they both deal with **Day And Night** - with **Darkness And Light**. We read in Genesis 1 that on the **first** day of creation, "*God separated the light from the darkness.*" Our text for today describes the **Last Day**, and there God said, "*You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.*" On day **one** there was a **separation** of night and day, and on the **Last Day** there will be a separation of those **living** in darkness from those **living** in the light - each experiencing totally different **eternities**. But we don't need to **wait** until the **Last Day** for that **separation**, because already **now** there is a stark **difference** between those who live in the darkness of **sin** and **unbelief**, and those who live in the light of **faith** and the knowledge of **Jesus**. The words of our text are an important encouragement not to **lose sight** of these truths, as we hear that there is a big **difference** between **Day And Night - Darkness And Light**. When the Day of Judgment arrives, those who live in the **darkness** of sin will be caught by **surprise** and **condemned**, while those who live in the **light** of the Savior will be **safe and sound**.

Paul wrote, "*Concerning the times and dates, brothers, there is no need to write to you, for you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.*" Paul didn't need to **bother** writing to us about the **date** of Jesus' return, because we know from the **Scriptures** that God has chosen to **hide** that information from us. Nevertheless, we **do** know that the day will come like a **thief** in the night - by **surprise** - without **warning**. There will be **no advance notice** of the day when Jesus will **return**.

The Day of the Lord will be as different as **Night And Day** when it comes to the **effect** it will have on people. For **some**, the day will come as a terrible **surprise**. Our text tells us, "*When people are saying, 'Peace and security,' destruction will suddenly come on them, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will certainly not escape.*" Paul is referring to people who live in **spiritual darkness** - people who live with a **false sense** of security. They don't feel like their **sins** will cause them any **trouble**. They don't feel like their **souls** are in any **danger**, in **spite** of what **God** says about sin. They pay **no attention** to the **warning signs** pointing to the day of **judgment**. Their whole approach to life centers on **this** world and what it can **offer**.

Those who live in spiritual **darkness** have a virtual “Do Not **Disturb**” sign pasted to their foreheads. When it comes to **spiritual** matters, and **faith** in the Lord Jesus, they don’t want to **hear** about it. They don’t mind if people tell them news that makes them **feel good**, or that reinforces a **tolerance** for sin, or even that speaks about a **god** who couldn’t hurt a fly. But they **don’t** want to hear about a call to **repentance** - a call to **leave** their sinful ways. They don’t want to hear about a **holy** God who threatens to **punish** sinners with eternal **damnation**.

But just because they don’t want to **hear** about it, doesn’t mean that it’s not **true**. Consequently, the day of Christ’s **return** will be a day of swift **destruction** for them. As suddenly as **birth** pains come to a pregnant woman, and everything else falls to the **wayside**; so suddenly will the **Judgment Day** come - and there will be **no escape** from the eternal **destruction** that God will bring on them. They will be robbed of their earthly **fame**, their **riches**, and their **trophies** - and the biggest tragedy of all, is that they will lose their **souls** to eternal **death**.

But the day of Jesus’ return will be much **different** for those who live in spiritual **light**. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “*You, brothers, are **not** in the dark so that this day takes you by **surprise** like a thief, for you are all sons of the **light** and sons of the **day**. We do **not** belong to the **night** or the **darkness**.*” For God’s family of **believers**, the day of the Lord will **not** come as a terrible **surprise**. Believers have the **light** of Jesus Christ - the **light** of God’s Word - **light** that leads us to **mourn** because of our sins, and to **repent** of them. God’s Word **also** shows us that **Jesus** is the **light** of the world - the **Savior** who died on Calvary’s **cross** to take away our sins - the **Savior** who **rose** from the grave with the promise that **we too** will live eternally. God’s Word causes our faith to burn **brightly** - to turn **away** from this world, and to live for **Christ** - to set our hearts and minds on the **eternal** treasures of **heaven** which Jesus has **reserved** for us. We know Jesus may come at **any** time, and we’re eagerly **waiting** for His arrival - an arrival which will bring us great **joy**.

Jesus’ return is like **Day And Night**. Those who walk in the **day** won’t be **surprised**, while those who walk in the **night** will be caught with sudden loss. Where do **we** fit in? Are we resting securely in **ourselves**, or do our sins cause us **alarm**? Are we **blind** to the grace of God, or are we eternally **grateful** for His mercy toward us? The answer is **clear**. We are children of the **light**.

But it wasn’t **always** that way. Paul told the Ephesians, “*For you were **once darkness**, but **now** you are **light** in the Lord.*” We were born into this world in the darkness of **unbelief**, and we were destined for **hell**. But in **baptism**, the Lord

poured His Holy Spirit into our hearts, and graciously called us **out** of darkness into His marvelous **light**. God's Word **shines** for us like a light for our **path**. It **exposes** our deeds of darkness. God's Word **shines** in our lives, so we can **see** the saving love of **Jesus**, and know that because He **paid** for our sins with His perfect **life**, we are now **forgiven**. We are children of the **day** because of God's **grace**. So let's strive to **continue** to live our lives in the **light** of God's Word, as it guides us on our path. That will make His **return** on the Last Day a **joyous** return for us - a **welcome** event which will usher in our **eternal** life in heaven.

Jesus' return is like **Day And Night**. Not only is this true of how people will **respond** to Him on the day He **returns**, but it's **also** true of how people live their lives **prior** to His return. Those who belong to the night **sleep**; while those who belong to the day are **alert**. Paul writes, *"So then let us **not sleep** like everyone else, but rather let us remain **alert and sober**. To be sure, those who **sleep**, sleep at **night**, and those who get **drunk**, get drunk at **night**. But since **we** belong to the **day**, let us be **sober**, putting on **faith and love** as a breastplate, and the hope of **salvation** as a helmet."* Paul tells us that the people who walk in darkness are not "woke" - they are **asleep**. They have **turned off** the light of God's Word, and are sound **asleep** in the darkness of spiritual **indifference** - living their lives to obtain the **power** and **pleasures** of this world. Paul told the **Romans**, *"Although they **claim** to be **wise**, they have become **fools** ... So, as they followed the **sinful desires** of their hearts, God **handed them over** to the impurity of **degrading** their own bodies among themselves. Such people have **traded the truth** about God for the **lie**, worshipping and serving the **creation** rather than the **Creator**, who is worthy of praise forever."* Their sense of **judgment** has been completely **distorted**. They feel **sure** that the Lord will **never** appear in **judgment**, and even if He **does**, it won't be anytime **soon**, and He certainly won't be judging **them**.

That's **not** the way **we** are supposed to think as people who walk in the **light**. Instead, Paul tells us to be **alert** and **sober**. The Lord tells us to **watch**, because the signs which will precede the Lord's return - signs which He has **provided** for us in His Word - are being **fulfilled**. Jesus Himself said, *"Watch out that no one **deceives** you. Because many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will **deceive many people** ... You will hear of **wars** and **rumors of wars** ... Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be **famines** and **earthquakes** in various places ... They will hand you over to be **persecuted**, and they will put you to **death**. You will be **hated** by all nations because of my name. Then **many will fall away** from the faith. They will **betray** each other and **hate** each other. Many **false prophets** will appear and **deceive** many people. Because **lawlessness will increase**, the love of many will **grow cold**."*

If we are **watching** - if we are **alert** - I don't think the things we are seeing in our world **right now** could really be any **clearer**. Dear friends, we need to be filled with the **Holy Spirit**, so we can make **sound Christian decisions** as we patiently wait for our Lord's return.

Take the words of our text **seriously**, "*Be **alert and sober**.*" Those are the characteristics which mark the people of the **day** - those who have been called to faith in **Jesus**. And our text goes on to say, "*Since **we belong to the day**, let us be **sober**, putting on **faith and love as breastplate**, and the **hope of salvation as a helmet**.*" Paul pictures God's children as **soldiers** in a battle zone - men and women who put on **armor** in order to be ready for whatever **battles** they may have to face that day. We all need to be **ready**. We need to be dressed in the **armor of God**.

Two pieces of armor are specifically mentioned here by Paul. The **first** one is a **breastplate**. And the breastplate we are to wear is made up of two parts, **faith and love**. **Faith** takes hold of the righteousness of **Jesus** and covers our **sins**, making us **acceptable** to God. It gives us the **confidence** that Jesus will **shield** us from everything which might harm our **body or soul**. The **love** which is a part of our breastplate is the love of **Jesus**, who **showed** His love for us by sacrificing **Himself** to make us **holy - cleansing** us of all sins through the washing of **water** and the **Word**. The love of Jesus **inspires** us to show love for **one another**, as we work to **find** the lost, and to **regain** the straying, by sharing the **Gospel** with the world.

The **second** piece of armor which Paul mentions here, is the **hope of salvation**. As Christians, we look **forward** to the day of Christ's **return**, and to the **salvation** He will bring us on that day. That is our **hope** - and our hope is **certain**. As our text tells us, "*God did **not** appoint us for **wrath**, but for obtaining **salvation** through our Lord Jesus Christ. He **died** for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together **with him**.*" God wants **all** people to be **saved**, so Jesus endured the **wrath** of God **in our place**. He **suffered** and **died** for us, so that through His blood, we have **forgiveness** for all of our sins. Because of Jesus, we are destined to inherit **eternal life** with **all** its blessings and glory.

Jesus' return is like **Day And Night - Darkness And Light**. Those who walk in **darkness** are **sleeping** in this life, and will be **very surprised** when Jesus returns and they are **condemned** for all eternity. But those who walk in the **light** are **paying attention** to the signs which God has given to us, and are **suiting up**

with the armor of God, so our **faith** will be **secure**, and we will be **ready** when Jesus comes to take us home to **heaven**. Amen.