Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Night People/Day People, Part 2
Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:8b-11
Code: 52-23

We're going back now to 1 Thessalonians 5:4 to 11, fast moving in on the staccato climax of this great letter that comes in verses 12 through 28, which will enrich us all greatly. But as we look again at this particular text you will remember if you were with us two weeks ago that I've titled this "Night People/Day People." We made the point because Paul makes the point that all of the world is divided into two kinds of people: night people and day people; people associated with the darkness and people associated with the light. Let me just read the text for you beginning at verse 4, "But you, brethren, are not in darkness that the day should overtake you like a thief, for you are all sons of light and sons of day, we are not of night nor of darkness. So then let us not sleep as others do but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation, for God has not destined us for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another just as you also are doing."

In that text, obviously, Paul speaks about day people and night people. And he is not the one who introduces this concept. It goes way back even into the Old Testament. Let me see if I can't give you a little bit of the history of this particular emphasis. In Psalm 107 verse 10 the Scripture says, "There were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in misery and chains because they had rebelled against the words of God and spurned the counsel of the most high." Now, there is a description of people who are night people, people in the darkness. They dwell in darkness. They dwell in the shadow of death. They are prisoners in misery, and they are chained by their sins, is implied, because they have rebelled against the words of God and spurned the counsel of the most high. The next verse says that God, therefore, has humbled their heart with labor. That is, there's a tremendous amount of humiliating effort that gains them nothing, they stumbled and there was none to help. Such is the plight of the night people.

Then, beginning in verse 13 we read about a rescue from the night, bringing people into the day. It says, "Then, they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, He saved them out of their distresses, He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and broke their bans apart," that is the cords of sin and iniquity and misery that made them prisoner. "Consequently let them give thanks to the Lord for His loving kindness and for His wisdom to the sons of men, for He has shattered gates of bronze and cut bars of iron asunder." And so, here you find this introduction of night people and the

terrible bondage of being in the night and in the darkness, and the note about their liberation through the loving kindness of God and the wonder of His grace to men. He has brought them out of darkness into light. And so, we find then that God has the desire to bring people out of the night into the day.

Isaiah made more specific this desire of God when he wrote about the Messiah. For in Isaiah chapter 9 we read, “The people,” verse 2, “who walk in darkness will see a great light, those who live in a dark land, the light will shine upon them. And who is it that can bring men out of darkness? Who is it that is this light who shines?” Well, down in verse 6 it says, “A child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us, the government will rest on His shoulders and His name will be called wonderful, counselor, mighty God, eternal Father, prince of peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace on the throne of David and over His kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forever more the zeal of the Lord of host will accomplish this.” And of course, the child to which Isaiah refers is the Messiah.

So, the heart of God in Psalm 107 is to take the people in the dark and bring them into the light. The Messiah comes for the very purpose of bringing the light and shining it in the dark place. If we go into the New Testament, preliminary to the discussion of Christ, Luke chapter 1 discusses John the Baptist. And in Luke chapter 1 we have the father of John the Baptist, a priest by the name of Zecharias, the husband of Elizabeth, having heard that his son was to be the forerunner of the Messiah, he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he prophesied. And in Luke 1 verse 68 and following you have what came out of the inspired lips of Zecharias in response to the promise of a son, John the Baptist, who would be the forerunner of Messiah. Down in verse 76, we can pick up what he says, speaking of his son, John the Baptist, “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the most high, for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways, to give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the sun rise,” that is Christ, “from on high shall visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace.” And so, Zecharias rejoices and exalts before God with praise because he knows his son will be the forerunner of the sunrise, the sunlight, the Son of righteousness as the Old Testament prophet called Him, who will bring the light to shine in the darkness that makes day people out of night people.

And so, you start with the desire of God to bring men out of darkness to light. You move to the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah who said it will be the Messiah, to John the Baptist who came to declare to the world that the sunrise was coming who would bring the light to the darkness. And then, you hear the words, so powerfully spoken in Matthew chapter 4, beginning in verse 12 it says, “He withdrew into Galilee, and leaving Nazareth He came and settled in Capernaum which is by the sea in the region of Zebulon and Naphtali, and this was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet saying, the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali by the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light. And to those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned.” Isaiah said it

would and Zecharias said his son would announce it, and now Christ says it has. I'm here, the light has dawned, and from that time He began to say, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

And again in John chapter 8 in those lovely and familiar words, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." And so, this theme of night people and day people is an old theme. You find it way back in the Old Testament where God sees the unconverted sinner as the night person and the believing saint as the day person. Jesus Christ the Messiah, the Savior, being the means of transporting people from darkness to light.

But how so? What makes it happen? Given that Christ is the one who can do it, by what means? In Acts 26, we find the magnificent statement of God Himself through Christ speaking to the apostle Paul on the Damascus Road as Paul recites his testimony. In Acts 26:15, the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But arise and stand on your feet, for this purpose I have appeared to you to appoint you a minister and a witness, not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you, delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified," here's the key, "by faith in Me." The Lord Jesus Himself said to Paul, "Your task is to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, which is the same as turning from the dominion of Satan to God, and receiving forgiveness of sins and an inheritance, but it happens to those who are set apart by faith in Me." To become a day person, you must put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are set apart unto God as children of the day by faith in Christ are transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, the kingdom of light. It is by faith that that takes place, by believing.

In Colossians 1:13, "He delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." And how so? By believing, putting our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Ephesians chapter 5 it says, "You were formerly darkness but now you are light in the Lord." And so, we see the flow. God has a desire in His heart to take people out of darkness. The prophet prophesized that there will come a child who indeed will be the one to bring the light in the dark place. The New Testament tells us there will be a forerunner who will announce His coming, and then He will come, and He will announce that He is the light of the world. And then, in the book of Acts there is a preacher who is sent, and he is to say that he will bring darkness where there is faith in Him. And then we find that those who have put their faith in Him are indeed translated from darkness to light, they become children of the day. They were formerly darkness; now are they light and in them lives the light of life.

And so, by the time we come to 1 Thessalonians, we've had much of this. We've heard much of this. We understand the difference between night people and day people. The world then is divided into

those two kinds of people: night people and day people. And this is a forever division. Hell is the eternal darkness, and the eternal night, occupied by the night people. Heaven is the eternal light, the eternal day, occupied by the day people. And so, the theme of this distinct difference between night and day is familiar to the text of Scripture. “Night people,” Paul says, back to our text now, 1 Thessalonians 5, “are associated with darkness, sleep and drunkenness. Day people are associated with light, alertness and soberness.” The apostle then is drawing a very clear line of demarcation, a very stark and complete contrast, between those who have salvation in Jesus Christ by faith in Him and those who do not.

Now, why is he making this contrast here as he comes to a conclusion in this epistle? Simply stated, in order to encourage the Thessalonian Christians. In chapter 4 and verse 18 he says, “Therefore comfort one another with these words,” and in chapter 5 verse 11, “Therefore comfort one another or encourage one another,” same word, “and build up one another just as you also are doing.” So, this section that we’re looking at is bracketed by two statements about comfort. Here his purpose is to comfort some fearful Christians. The Thessalonians were new Christians. They were young in the Lord, and I have no question but when they were evangelized originally by the apostle Paul, his message was very, very strongly emphasizing judgment. He preached judgment. He preached the wrath of God. He preached eternal condemnation in hell. And when he evangelized the people in Thessalonica, no doubt he made a major point out of future judgment. He must have said much even about the day of the Lord, the final day of vengeance, the wrath of God when He unleashes all His fury against ungodly sinners and sends them into an eternal hell. He no doubt talked about the inevitable end of sin and where it leads when he first evangelized them. And after they were saved, probably told them more about the day of the Lord. At least that seems to be the indication in 2 Thessalonians.

And so, they had a healthy fear of God’s judgment. It may have been that fear, it was the major factor in driving them to consider the claims of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross and His resurrection. And so, they had this very strong and serious sense about eternal damnation. As a result of that, there was a certain anxiety in their hearts, and they were fearful that perhaps some Christian would miss the Rapture and end up in judgment, that somehow if a Christian died or got overlooked, he might wind up getting the wrath of God against him.

You remember already in our discussion of chapter 4 verses 13 to 18 that they were wondering if a Christian died before Jesus came, would he miss the Rapture? They thought perhaps that if he missed the Rapture he would end up in eternal wrath, that only the Christians who were alive when Jesus came would be taken. The rest would be damned. And so, they were fearful. And one of their fears was that if they missed the Rapture they might get caught in the day of the Lord. Maybe God would not remember them. Maybe the Lord would forget them. Or maybe they would somehow forfeit it because of their death. And so, they were afraid. And this section is written to comfort them, to waylay their fears, to encourage them with the fact that there is such a clear distinction between day

people and night people. God knows that distinction; He knows who belong to Him. And the way He's going to treat night people and the way He's going to treat day people are totally different. There's no place in the events of night people for day people, and there's no place in the events of day people for night people. And God knows the difference, and you can be comforted about that.

This is very, very reminiscent of an earlier group of people who had similar fears. If you look at the last book in the Old Testament, the prophecy written by Malachi, you find a very interesting parallel there. Here were some Jews in Israel who had somewhat the same kinds of anxieties. There was a major message being preached by Malachi on the day of the Lord. In fact, in chapter 4 verse 5 he even uses the phrase, "the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord." And so, Malachi's message had been about the day of the Lord, coming judgment, coming damnation, coming final fury from God, burning like a furnace, consuming sinners. And this caused some anxiety among some of God's children.

If you look at Malachi 3:16 it says, "Then, those who feared the Lord," and here it means those who reverenced the Lord, those who knew the Lord, those who were saints who had a true relationship with God, "spoke to one another." And what were they saying? It doesn't tell us, but we can pretty well guess. They were sharing their concern. I wonder if we're going to get caught up in this furnace, if we're going to get caught up in God's fury. Are we going to get caught up in the terrible justice of the holy God as He comes against sinners? And it says the Lord heard their conversation, gave attention to it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and esteem His name. He had a book, and the names of those who really loved Him and served Him and believed in Him were written in that book. And in verse 17 it says, "And they will be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, on the day that I prepare My own possession. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." No way are they going to get caught in the wrath. No way are they going to get caught in My fury. No way are they going to get caught in the day of the Lord, the day of vengeance. No. I know who they are, and I have a book, and their names are there and they're going to have a different day, a day when I make up My own possessions. And I'll spare those who serve Me.

And verse 18 he says, "So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who doesn't serve Him." God has no problem knowing the difference, and the prophet says you shouldn't have a problem either. Verse 1 of chapter 4, follow that, "For behold the day is coming, burning like a furnace, and all the arrogant and every evil doer will be chaff." That was the part of the sorting out of the wheat that was just burned to an ash. The unbelievers, evil doers, arrogant are going to be consumed. "The day that is coming will set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch, but for you who fear My name, the Sun of righteousness," there's that light picture again, "will rise with healing in its beams and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall, and you will tread down the wicked for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing." He goes

on to say the great and terrible day of the Lord.

And one thing we know about is that during the time of the Tribulation many Jews are going to be converted, Israel is going to be saved. Many of those Jews, of course, will evangelize others in the world and there will be a great host of Gentiles that will be redeemed. They will all be spared the holocaust of the day of the Lord and will walk on the ashes of those who have been consumed. God knows the difference. He doesn't burn up His own. He spares His own. He has a day for them. And they will skip like calves into the kingdom where they will reign as those who know and love God and know and love His Son, the Messiah. God has promised always to spare the righteous. And they will escape His wrath completely.

So, here in this letter to these disturbed young Christians, Paul gives great assurance that they will not be judged with the ungodly world. That there's no way they're going to miss the Rapture and end up in the day of the Lord, there's no way they're going to miss heaven and end up in hell. No way. And in order to make this encouragement firm, it is delineated through a series of stark contrasts. And we've been looking at these contrasts.

The contrast between the Rapture and the day of the Lord, being caught up to heaven and being destroyed on earth, the contrast between salvation and wrath, life and death, hope and no hope, day and night, light and darkness, being awake and being asleep, being sober and being drunk, being forever with the Lord and being forever without the Lord. All of those are very clear contrasts through this whole text, starting back in chapter 4 verse 13. And it shows a total separation between believers and unbelievers, Christians and non-Christians, the saved and the lost. Any fearing Christian can look deeply into this passage and have his or her fears calmed. We will not suffer wrath, we will not be in the day of the Lord, because we are distinct from those who will be there, and we will be in the Rapture and we will be in glory because we are children of the day and children of the light.

Now, in looking at verses 4 through 11, Paul says we should be encouraged because of the distinctiveness of three things: our nature, our behavior, and our destiny. Our nature, our behavior and our destiny. And if we understand how in these three dimensions we are utterly different from the ungodly, we should not have any fear.

Now, reviewing very briefly. First of all, we already looked at the distinctiveness of our nature. Look at verses 4 and 5, "But you, brethren, are not in darkness that the day should overtake you like a thief, for you are all sons of light and sons of day, we are not of night nor of darkness." In other words, there's an inherent difference. We don't even live in that sphere; we aren't even of that ilk. We are day people, not night people. We live in the light of Christ's life. And He lives in us. And we are in God in whom is no darkness at all, 1 John 1:5 to 7 says. We are not in the domain of darkness. We are not in the domain of night. We are not in the domain of drunkenness. Darkness, sin, ignorance, death is the realm of the fallen cursed and the dead who are in Adam, but we are in Christ. We have a new

nature, a new domain, a new sphere of life, a new kingdom. And because of this, the day will not overtake us, like a thief. The day of the Lord does not enter our sphere of life. It does not impact us. As we've been saying all along, the church will be taken out before the day of the Lord, and those of Israel who are saved after that, and of the Gentile world will be preserved through the day of the Lord so that they will actually tread on the ashes of the ungodly that perish. The day of the Lord has nothing to do with our sphere of life. We have nothing to do with it. Sin has no dominion, no condemnation with day people.

Secondly, we saw not only the distinctiveness of our nature but the distinctiveness of our behavior. Verses 6 and 7, he says, "So then," that is, based upon the difference in nature, here's some words about conduct, identity and conduct being inseparable, you will reflect your nature, "so let us not sleep as others do but let us be alert and sober for those who sleep do their sleeping at night and those who get drunk get drunk at night." By the way, night people can only be night people, they can't be day people and night people can't do the deeds of the day. But day people can do the deeds of the night. We can reach back to old patterns of conduct. We don't have to; it's not consistent with our new nature and our new identity and our sphere of life. We are day people living in the light, but we can do the deeds of darkness. And if we do, we do them in broad light, don't we? We do them with full understanding, and we do them with full exposure.

But he says here: there's no place for night life among day people. Our behavior is different. As a pattern our behavior is different. It kind of could be simply stated like this, an unbeliever does only evil, only evil. He's a night person. He lives in the night; he does the deeds of the night in the sleeping ignorance, indifference and an aggressive, overt, immoral drunkenness. But a day person has a pattern of doing what is right, but it can be injected by doing what is wrong. The day person can do the deeds of the night. And the very commands here to believers indicate that we can do the deeds of darkness. And if you do, you're going contrary to your nature. You're violating your very identity. We don't want that to happen. Our behavior should be consistent with our nature. Our behavior should be so distinct that we know we are of the day. And because we know we are of the day, we do not fear, wrath, judgment, damnation.

And that's what he says in verse 8. Look at the beginning of verse 8. "But since we are of the day." That's our identity, that takes us back to verse 5. We are sons of day. We are sons of light. Not of night or darkness. Since this is true, since our nature is such and the pattern of our conduct is such, then let's be sober? What do you mean by that? Let's be watchful, let's be alert so that we don't get sucked in to doing the deeds of the night. That's his point. Even though they're inconsistent with our nature, they can occur. You need to be alert. You need to protect yourself against the temptation to do the deeds of the night. And if you do that, you'll continue to see visibly, before your very eyes, your distinctiveness, and that will give you great assurance as you look at the future and you'll have nothing to fear. On the other hand, if a Christian falls into patterns of sinfulness, he loses assurance, loses confidence, loses hope, and may fear that he will get caught in the day of the Lord.

And so, he says since you're of the day, since we are of the day, let us be sober. The idea of sober is alert, watchful. And undoubtedly as Paul said that, the idea of alertness suggested to him a picture of soldier on duty because he moves immediately into describing a soldier. Let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. Fascinating and very, very basic statement. As he thinks about a Christian who is a day person, a child of the day, a son of the light, and as he thinks about that person being watchful and alert so that he doesn't get tempted to do the deeds of the night, his mind goes to the one who was most watchful, most sober minded, most alert and that would be a soldier in duty. And he sees him properly armed with protective armor. Paul calls this in Romans 13:12 the armor of light. This day child in the light is alert, sober, on duty, armed for protection and preservation. And so, he says in verse 8, "Having put on the breastplate." Keeping on, keeping it on. It fits in with the present tense of "be sober." The idea of being sober by being continually armed.

Now, a well-equipped soldier only had two essential pieces of equipment that preserved him. One was the breastplate; the other was the helmet. Those are the vital areas. Breastplate covering all the vital organs, and, of course, the helmet covering the head. You notice there's no sword here because this is not the imagery that Paul is concerned about. He's concerned about a person on guard against the onslaught of the night and defending himself. He's not concerned with attacking with the sword. He's not saying the children of the day attack the night people. That's not the imagery here. What he is saying here is you need to be protected, and so he only deals with the two pieces of protective gear: the breastplate and the helmet.

Now, the breastplate was an obvious part of the Roman soldier's garb. It covered the very area where he was vulnerable, the vital organs where he could so easily be killed. The breastplate could be made out of chain mail; it could have been made out of gold. Some of them were made out of heavy cloth. Some of them were made out of brass. Some of them were made out of iron. Some were made out of leather. Any other material. It was like a bulletproof vest, basically. And the parallel that we would understand to the helmet would be something like a football helmet or a motorcycle helmet that could protect blows from crushing the skull. And this was the soldier that was armed against the attack of temptation.

By the way, this imagery is not original with Paul. He borrowed it out of Isaiah 59:17. There's a beautiful statement in that chapter maybe you haven't read, Isaiah 59:17, "And he put on righteousness like a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head and he put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped himself with zeal as a mantle," and so forth. And there you have the first mention of a breastplate of righteousness and a helmet of salvation in Isaiah chapter 59. And you have it repeated again in Ephesians 6:13, of course, in Paul's description of the armor of the believer in that section of his letter to Ephesus.

Now, it isn't important to go in to all kinds of detail about the physical analogy, the breastplate and the helmet. What is important is you note what they represent. The breastplate represents faith and love, and the helmet represents the hope of salvation. Listen very carefully. You know if you know anything about the New Testament that these three come together quite frequently. Back in chapter 1 of this epistle and verse 3 you have the mention of faith, hope and love, that very familiar usage in 1 Corinthians 13:13 which says, "And now, abides faith, hope and love and the greatest of these is love." This is the triad of supreme Christian virtues.

But what I want to say to you and what is very, very important for you to understand is that these are the three great defenses against temptation. Okay? If you want to deal with temptation in your life, these are three things you must understand and apply. I'm going to give you what right now is the most practical instruction you can possibly have as a believer with regard to dealing with sin in your life. So, if you're concerned about dealing with sin in your life and overcoming temptation, you must know these things.

First of all, faith, a defense against temptation. In what sense? Let me say it this way: sin is a result of distrusting God. Sin is a result of distrusting God. That's as clear as I can say it. God is worthy of your trust. Let me tell you how. You can trust in His person. He will be consistent with His attributes. He will never deviate from His character, never. He will never deviate from His character. He has perfect integrity. You can trust His person. He will do what is consistent with who He is. Secondly, you can trust His power. Nothing is too hard for Him. Nothing is too difficult for Him. Nothing overwhelms Him. No one can defeat Him. And no amassed circumstances cumulatively are more than He can unscramble and handle and overcome. You can trust His person, you can trust His power. Third, you can trust His promise. If He says something, He will do it. If He promises something, He will keep it. Fourth, you can trust His plan. He is unfolding a sovereignly controlled plan that is right on schedule. Nothing exists outside that plan.

If, then, I believe that God is consistent with His person, that God is all powerful, that God always keeps His Word and His promise and that God is unfolding His plan, then no matter what comes into my life if I trust God, I will not fall to temptation that questions God's credibility.

Now, all temptation questions His credibility. Let me tell you why. For example, you're tempted to worry. What does that mean? If you worry, what you're saying is, "Yes, God, I know You said You're in charge, and I know You said this thing wasn't too hard for You, and I know You said You could handle it, and I know You're working out a plan, I just don't believe You," right? I'm going to worry, which says, "God, I know You say You can be trusted, I'm just not sure You can." When I lie, what am I saying? God says, "Obey Me and do what's right and I'll bless you." And I say, "But in order to get what I want, I have to lie because if the truth is known I won't get what," So, what you're really saying is, "God, I know You said You'd bless me if I tell the truth, but You're wrong, it's not going to work out

the way I want it if I do what's right, so I'll do what's wrong." You're denying God His own integrity.

If I commit adultery I'm saying to God, "Look, God, You've said that if I have faithfulness to my wife, You'll bless my marriage, and if I love my partner in life You'll bless that union, and You'll fulfill me. But You know something, God? You're wrong. I don't believe You. I believe there's more to be gained in an illicit relationship than in the one You've given me." And that is an act of distrust against God. Faith always puts up the breastplate. It makes you impenetrable if you believe God, because sin is always a temptation not to believe God. God says do what is right and I'll bless you. Satan says do this and you'll have fun. Who do you believe? Do this and it will feel good. Who do you believe? It comes down to that.

And so, that's why I always say, how you live your Christian life is directly related to, first of all, your understanding of God and your confidence that He is who He is. That's why the most important thing you can ever learn as a Christian is not some kind of a formula to deal with temptation, the most important thing you can ever learn as a Christian is the fullness of the character of God and then grow to believe that. And if you really trust God, then those other things aren't going to happen. You're not going to fall prey to those temptations. If I believe that God is sovereign, that God is perfectly righteous, that God is all powerful, that God is faithful to His promise, and that God has a perfect plan for my life and every component in it is under His control, then I don't question anything. I don't argue with anything. I don't violate anything, because I believe God. Faith puts up the shield.

Now, that's the hard side. Any Roman shield had a soft side. Underneath that hard armor was soft cloth to warm the body. And that, he says, is love. It's the breastplate of faith and love. Here's the other side of it. All sin reflects a failure to love God. All sin reflects a failure to love God. What do you mean love? Delight in, listen carefully, delight in and devotion to God as the supreme object of my affection. Delight in and devotion to God as the supreme object of my affection. Now, listen to this very carefully. Whoever is the supreme object of my affection is going to control what I do. If I sin, what I have just said is, "Sorry, God, I am the supreme object of my affection," right? I'm going to do what I want to do. I'm going to do what feels good to me. You're not the supreme object of my affection. But if I love God supremely, Paul says in Romans 13, love fulfills the whole what? The whole law. I don't need a law that says don't make any graven images, if I love God supremely. I'm not going to make any. I don't need a law that says don't take the name of the Lord your God in vain. If I love God supremely I'm not going to take His name in vain. I don't need laws that say don't do this and don't do that because it's against the will of God, if I love God supremely, I won't do those things.

So, the hard side of my breastplate, that resilient resistant strength, is that I believe God. And the soft side of it is that I love God. And between my love for Him, which is supreme, and my confidence in Him which is supreme, I become impregnable. You see, whenever you sin you have failed to believe God and you have failed to love God. You failed to believe Him because you believed Satan's lie, the lie of your sinful impulses. And you failed to love Him because you loved yourself more and you

wanted to fulfill yourself. Perfect trust in God and perfect love for God leads you to perfect obedience.

So, Paul says, “Look, your behavior, the pattern of your behavior is now light, you’re children of the day, be watchful, get your armor on, trust God with all your heart and don’t lean on your own understanding. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and you will withstand the onslaughts of the temptations of the night.” The outer surface shines with faith, and the inner surface is lined with love.

And then, he adds another protection that a soldier had to have: the helmet of the hope of salvation. You say, “Why does a Christian need to put on the helmet of salvation? Keep putting it on? Don’t we already have salvation?” Yes, but he’s talking about the hope of the future aspect of our salvation. It comes in three dimensions. We were saved in the past, the day we believed. We’re saved in the present, as we are kept saved by the continuing grace and forgiveness of God. And some day, there is yet a future element of salvation in which we are released from these bodies, these bodies are redeemed and become new, glorified bodies, and we enter in to the perfection of being like Jesus Christ. That’s the final dimension of our salvation; that’s what he has in mind here. This is a very simple point. He says you will protect yourself against temptation if your heart is filled with the realization of what you’re going to become.

You understand that? Of what you’re going to become. If you have the hope of eternal glory, if you know you’re the child of the day that will dawn into the greater and brighter day of eternal glory, you’re going to behave consistently with your identity. The hope of eternal glory, the hope of the coming of Jesus Christ, seeing Him face to face, hearing “Well done, good and faithful servant,” receiving His reward, that hope preserves the Christian against the luring of the darkness. And it’s not an uncertain hope, it’s a certain hope.

So, as I really know my future destiny and know that I’m going to be with the Lord forever and I’m going to serve Him and honor Him forever and I’m going to someday be rewarded for my life, that purifies me. Remember 1 John 3:3, “He that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure.” So, what is it that preserves and protects the believer? Faith, that is trust in God’s perfection. Love, complete devotion to Him as your supreme delight. And hope, the anticipation that someday you’re going to see Him face to face and receive the reward for what you have rendered. Faith, hope, and love are the defenses against the onslaught of the night.

When faith is weak, love is cold. When love is cold, hope is lost and sin results. When faith is strong, love is zealous. When love is zealous, hope is firm. And when hope is firm, righteousness results. Our defense against the debilitating deeds of the night is a strong trust in God in all things, a fiery love for Him, and a purifying hope in His glorious return and the day we see Him face to face.

We're different. We're different in nature, we're different in conduct. And we need to continue to be different by defending ourselves against the onslaught of the deeds of darkness. But even when we occasionally do the deeds of darkness, we know they're out of the normal pattern for our lives. We are day people, as to nature and behavior and therefore the day of the Lord and the wrath of God have nothing to do with us.

And lastly, Paul says we should not fear not only because of the distinctiveness of our nature and our behavior but the distinctiveness of our destiny. This is wonderful. Verse 9, "For God has not destined us for wrath." Now we're talking about our final destiny. God has not destined us for wrath. It's almost a past, present and future. Our nature was established in the past; that's proof we have nothing to do with wrath. Our present pattern of obedience is proof we have nothing to do with wrath. And our future destiny is proof we have nothing to do with the day of the Lord or with wrath. None of these dimensions should we have any fear. God has not destined us for wrath.

He said the same thing, didn't he, back in chapter 1 verse 10, that Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come. Also, Paul wrote that marvelous statement almost identically in Romans 5:9, "Much more than having now been justified by His blood we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." We're not destined for wrath. Our hope is reasonable then because of this great truth. We should be comforted. We should be encouraged. God has not sovereignly destined us to wrath. When God pours out His wrath on the day of the Lord, it won't be for us. When God pours out His final wrath in eternal hell, it won't be for us. The word "destined" implies that God has sovereignty over us, as He does over all of human life in history. And His plan which was laid in foundation before the world began included us in glory. We were not destined, predestined, foreordained, predetermined for wrath; but we were predestined, predetermined and foreordained and foreknown unto glory. We were once children of wrath, Ephesians 2:2 and 3, before we were saved we were children of wrath. But no more.

Now, what is this wrath he's talking about? What kind of wrath here? The word *org* is used, it means a settled, heated anger. It's not just a momentary impulsive thing; it's a settled, heated anger. But what does it mean? Well, this term "wrath," or "the wrath of God" is used often in Scripture, and generally speaking it is a general reference to God's final judgment, without necessarily being specific. For example, in Matthew 3:7, John the Baptist looked at the Pharisees and Sadducees and he said, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come." What does he mean by that? Final damnation, hell, final judgment, eternal wrath on sinners. The fury of God unleashed in the pit of darkness and burning. In John chapter 3, John ends that third chapter, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides on him." What wrath is that? Eternal judgment, eternal damnation, eternal punishment. You come to Romans 1 verse 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." Again that's very general, speaking about the ultimate damnation, final judgment of sinners. You find in Romans chapter 2 the

same kind of thing. Verses 5 and 8 talk about wrath and God's day of wrath. And all the way through Romans, chapter 3 verse 5; 4 verse 15; 5 verse 9; chapter 9 verse 22; chapter 12 verse 19, and so forth. And so, you can compare also Ephesians 5:6, Colossians 3:6, and even the 14th chapter of Revelation.

And in all of these you find wrath is spoken of in somewhat general terms that God is simply talking about ultimate damnation, ultimate destruction of the ungodly when He pours out His wrath. God has not destined us for wrath, period, in the general sweeping sense. But it must incorporate in it also the concept of the day of the Lord because that's what the context of 1 Thessalonians 5 is talking about.

So, as we look then at verse 9 and it says He's not destined us for wrath; we must incorporate into that word "wrath" the day of the Lord. We're not destined for eternal wrath and we're not destined for temporal wrath in the day of the Lord when He burns up all the sinners on the earth and then sends them to hell. We have part in neither of those things. It's not our destiny. And by the way, there is usage of the wrath of God to refer to the temporal day of the Lord. If you take the time, you can look at Revelation 6 where you have the sixth seal. And it says the great, verse 17, day of their wrath, that is the wrath of God and the Lamb, has come and who is able to stand. So, there is a specific day of wrath that refers to the day of the Lord. In fact in verse 18 of Revelation 11, "Thy wrath came," it says, in Revelation 16:19 and 19:15. So, when you see the wrath of God it's a general term of God's final damnation of sinners, but sometimes it focuses in on a specific day of fury, as I noted in several places in the book of Revelation. Well, we're not destined for either of those things, not either of them.

Now, with that in mind, go back to verse 9, "But on the other hand," keeping the distinctions clear, "we are destined for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." For acquiring, literally in the Greek. And here Paul has the idea of that third dimension, that full final glorious future deliverance from judgment to come, that ultimate salvation and deliverance that lifts us into glory and makes us like Christ, that redemption of our bodies, that glorification that is the final phase of our salvation. And he says, I love this, at the end of verse 9, "Through our Lord Jesus Christ." All three phases are through the Lord. In the past we were saved at the point of faith through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are being kept saved through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will be ultimately delivered from the wrath to come and brought into the presence of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. All three phases, all three tenses, past, present and future, rest on what Christ has done.

And that's why in verse 10 he then says, "The Lord Jesus Christ who died for us." I wish we had time to dig into that statement. That is a powerful statement. For, who died on our behalf, who died with reference to us, to die in our place, to die as our substitute. He didn't die for Himself. He wasn't killed as a martyr for His own cause. He died for us. He died in our behalf. He died to accomplish for us what could otherwise never have been accomplished. Galatians 1:4, "Who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us out of this present evil age." He died for us, a substitutionary death; He died in your place. He bore in His body your sins and mine. He became our sins that we might become His

own. That's the message of the cross. He died for us. He paid our penalty. He suffered our punishment and our judgment at the hands of God. It says in 2 Corinthians 5:15, "And He died for all that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." He died for all; for you and for me, in our place. He took our death, and bore it for us.

And because of that, He granted to us salvation. He laid down His life, he says, in John 10:11 for the sheep. His death was the sole condition. Did you get that? The sole condition in procuring as God's peculiar possession, a people destined for salvation. It was the sole condition. Christ's death sets us apart from the night people. He died for us.

Now, verse 10, "That whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him." Now, he's not referring to awake or asleep in the sense of verse 6, that the night people are asleep and the day people are awake, or it would be saying "whether we're day people or night people we're going to be with Him." Not so. He's going all the way back to chapter 4, and back there it talked about believers who are awake and asleep. There are believers who are alive, and there are believers who are asleep. In verses 13 to 15, they were concerned about what happens to believers who die, or who are asleep. They used the term "sleep" for death, when the Rapture comes. And here he goes all the way back to their original question, and he says He died for us, the children of the day, that whether we are awake, that is alive, or whether we are asleep, that is we have died, we may live together with Him. You see, if you are questioning whether you're going to end up in the day of wrath, whether you're going to end up in the day of the Lord, you're questioning the efficacy of the death of Christ. He's saying, "Look, your nature is different, your behavior is different and your destiny is different, as determined by a sovereign God, and worked out through a sacrificing substitutionary death of His own Son. He's saying whether you live or die as a Christian, as a day person, your destiny is not wrath. Your destiny is to live together with Christ. Jesus said it in John 14, "I go away to prepare a," what? "A place for you, and I'll come again to receive you to Myself that where I am there you may be also." You're going to come and you're going to be with Me in My eternal presence.

The end of verse 17 and chapter 4, "We will always be with the Lord." See? There's no need to fear the day of the Lord. There's no need to fear the future condemnation and judgment of the ungodly. Whether you live or die as a Christian, whether you're awake or asleep, when it happens, you're not going to be there. Your nature is different. Your behavior is different. Your destiny is different.

So, in conclusion, verse 11, "Therefore," now he's being very pastoral, "encourage one another." The word "encourage" is exactly the same word as the word "comfort" in chapter 4 verse 18, identical word. Comfort each other, those that are anxious and worried and fearful. And build up one another, those that are weak and don't know very much and the weakness of their understanding causes them to be so anxious. Encourage and build up. There's no reason to be discouraged. There's no reason to be weak and in doubt. He says, do that. And then, he adds at the end of verse 11, "Just as you also are doing." They were such a commendable church. Back in chapter 4 verse 1 he says, "I want you to

excel more." You're already doing it but I want you to do more of it. They were a good group. You're already on the way, he says, now you encourage each other, and now you strengthen each other with this confidence, that as you look at the future you will never know the wrath of God; you will never experience the day of the Lord. It's not for you. So, as Christians we live in the reality that Jesus Christ is coming to Rapture; His bride, the church, to deliver her from the day of the Lord and eternal wrath, to grant her eternal joy and glory in His presence forever. We have no part in the wrath; we have no part in the darkness. We have no part in the night, the sleep, the drunkenness of the night people headed for hell. It has nothing to do with us. And even those people who are saved after the Rapture of the church and who go through the day of the Lord are going to be spared from it because they're going to tread on the ashes of those consumed by it. Day people, be comforted, be comforted. Night people, be warned, be warned. Let's pray.

Lord, this is such a powerful and direct text. It touches so pointedly, each of our lives. No one can escape, for all of us who are hearing this are either day people or night people. And to the day people: what a word of comfort, what a word of encouragement, and what a word of exhortation to keep the armor on. To the night people: what a fearful, threatening word of warning, of coming vengeance, damnation, judgment, punishment. O Lord, I pray for the day people to be encouraged and comforted and built up and strengthened. I pray for the night people, that the light might shine on them and the desire of Your heart is mentioned way back in Psalm 107 where we started, would come to pass, that they would be transported out of darkness into light, through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world, and in whom when we walk there is no darkness. Father, work Your work in encouraging the day people and bringing the night people out of their night of darkness into the dawn of the glorious day. These things we ask in the name of Christ. Amen.

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