

## “No Sleep Walking!” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

What is the difference between ignorance and apathy? I don't know and I don't care! That's the way a lot of people feel about Christ's return. They don't know and they don't care. Yet, the Bible repeats this theme over and over again.<sup>1</sup> Did you know that 27% of the Bible is prophecy?<sup>2</sup> In the Old Testament there are over 1,800 references to Christ's return. Of the 260 chapters in the New Testament, there are more than 300 references to Christ's return—one out of every 30 verses. Twenty-three of the 27 New Testament books give prominence to this subject. For every biblical prophecy concerning Christ's first coming, there are eight prophecies about His second coming.<sup>3</sup> In spite of this biblical data, many of us are so familiar with end-times teaching that we have tuned out. This tendency reminds me of how we treat our alarm clocks. We have grown so accustomed to hearing them sound off that we can press snooze as we sleep right through the alarm warning us to rise from our slumber. In light of our human tendency to forget and ignore God's Word, Paul sounds a red alert: “*Don't get caught sleeping!*” In 1 Thess 5:1-11, Paul issues three exhortations to live in light of the last days.<sup>4</sup>

**1. Wise up to end-times doctrine (5:1-3).** In this first section, Paul says we should be well-versed in biblical prophecy. He writes, “**Now as to<sup>5</sup> the times<sup>6</sup> and the epochs,<sup>7</sup> brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know<sup>8</sup> full well<sup>9</sup> that the day of the Lord will come<sup>10</sup> just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’<sup>11</sup> then destruction<sup>12</sup> will come upon them suddenly<sup>13</sup> like labor pains<sup>14</sup> upon a woman with child, and they will not<sup>15</sup> escape**” (5:1-3). Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they are well taught when it comes to end-times doctrine. Specifically, Paul has taught them about “the day of the Lord.” The day of the Lord is that future time when God will judge the world and punish the nations.<sup>16</sup> In 5:2, Paul says that this day will come “like a thief in the night.”<sup>17</sup> The trouble with thieves is that they do not tell us when they are coming. It is not their habit to send a warning postcard. The same unexpectedness will characterize the day of the Lord.<sup>18</sup> In 5:3, Paul also says that this day will come upon unbelievers like labor pains upon a pregnant woman.<sup>19</sup> My female sources tell me that labor pains are more uncomfortable than painful. They are bearable (easy for me to say, right?). A woman may feel one, and then not feel another for fifteen minutes or more. But as the moment of birth approaches, the pains become more acute—and they get closer together. There comes a point where the woman has to make a mad dash for the maternity wing of the local hospital. In the same way, during the day of the Lord, times will be frightfully bad—but to add fuel to the raging fire—they will escalate out of hand rapidly.<sup>20</sup> Yet, in the midst of this, the world will be declaring peace and security.

It is worth noting that the word translated “full well” (*akribos*) indicates that the Thessalonians gained knowledge of the day of the Lord from Paul's accurate teaching of the Old Testament. The root word for “full well” means “pointed.” Paul pointedly expounded the Bible. He paid close attention to details when he read the Bible. He didn't hold anything back. He gave the Thessalonians the “skinny” as it pertained to the whole counsel of God's Word, including the end-times. Like Paul, I have intentionally sought to teach you end-times doctrine. Since I have come to EBF, I have taught Revelation, Luke's end-times parables, end-time passages from Mark, 1 Corinthians, 1 John, and now 1 Thessalonians. The reason that I have prioritized teaching on the end-times is so that you will be both prepared and motivated. But I must warn you: In Luke 12:48b Jesus says, “To whom much is given much is required.” With knowledge comes accountability. This is the most sobering reality about attending a Bible church. Can I ask you a few questions? What do you currently know about the end-times? Are you living out your knowledge? Or are you foolishly living as if you are guaranteed tomorrow and Christ couldn't possibly return today? I encourage you to wise up to end-times doctrine. *Don't get caught sleeping!*

[We are called to wise up to end-times doctrine because God expects us to know what He declares in His Word. And in the end, we will be held accountable for our knowledge or lack thereof.]

**2. Clear up your Christian identity (5:4-5).** In this second section, Paul reminds us of who we are in Christ. He puts it like this: **“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you<sup>21</sup> are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness.”** The phrase “but you, brethren”<sup>22</sup> is very emphatic. Paul is saying, “In contrast to the unbelievers in 5:2-3, believers will not be ‘surprised’<sup>23</sup> by the day of the Lord.”<sup>24</sup> The reason Paul gives is that believers are not in darkness; rather, they are “sons of light and sons of day.” Notice that Paul does not say, “You are all sons in light and sons in the day” but “*of the light*” and “*of the day*.” The issue is not where they are but who they are. We are “of day” because Christ has given us new life. We are lights in the world (Matt 5:14) because He is the “light of the world” (John 1:1-9; 8:12; 9:5). Jesus was the light as long as He was on the earth. In the same way, God characterizes us according to our nature. We are not in darkness, but are sons and daughters of light and sons and daughters of day. This is true for each and every person who has believed in Jesus Christ. Paul brings this home with the use of the word “all” in 5:5. Every Christian is defined as light and day, not just some.<sup>25</sup> So if you’re a believer, *don’t get caught sleeping!*

Maybe you’re thinking, “I’ve failed Christ and don’t deserve to serve Him.” Well, that’s true of you and me both. We have all miserably failed Christ. No one deserves to serve Him. Nevertheless, Christ longs to use us in a powerful way. Therefore, we must recognize that we represent Him for good or bad since we are His ambassadors as long as we live (2 Cor 5:20). We may be poor examples, but we are nonetheless His people, who need to be reminded of this truth: The world is not dark because of all the evil; the world is dark because so few Christians are giving off light. God illumines Christians but we are often guilty of hiding our light under a basket (Matt 5:15). Why is this? I maintain that many Christians don’t recognize who they are. When we are confused about our identity with Christ we will remain in an infantile state. Obviously, this is unacceptable. You would never be content with your children if they refused to grow up. Likewise, the Lord says, “Believer, get out of the nursery and into the infantry. I need you on the front lines of my battle brigade.” One way to be useful is by working through our identity in Christ. You can do this by simply reading through the New Testament and noting every description God applies to believers. I go through a worksheet that I have created called, “Who You Are in Christ.” If you are interested in using this resource I would be happy to e-mail it to you. But whatever you do—*don’t get caught sleeping!*

[It is critical that you and I clear up our Christian identity. As we do so, we will be propelled forward in our spiritual maturity.]

**3. Wait up for Christ’s return (5:6-11).** In this final section, Paul says, “Wait up for Christ’s return by behaving in a godly way.” In other words, don’t be caught off guard like unbelievers. Our problem is that “waiting” sounds inactive and boring to us. After all, when most of us think of waiting we think of something we despise. Think about the last time you sat in a waiting room at a doctor’s office, a dentist’s office, or a train station. UGH! It can be painful because we are impatient people. But the biblical notion of waiting is highly active (cf. 1:9).<sup>26</sup> In 5:6 Paul says, “Wake up!” He writes, **“So then let us not sleep as others<sup>27</sup> do, but let us be alert<sup>28</sup> and sober.”**<sup>29</sup> The term “sleep” (*katheudo*) in this context refers to spiritual lethargy and negligence with a view to Christ’s return.<sup>30</sup> It is the opposite of being “alert and sober.” We all know that there are “morning people” and “evening people.” Spiritually, we are called to be “morning people” for God. Tragically, many believers are spiritual sleepwalkers who have been intoxicated by the world. Honestly, it is easy to yawn and sleep through life. Research from Barna and Gallup demonstrates that there is no longer any difference between the behavior of Christians and non-Christians. In some cases, Christians are actually more immoral and unethical than many non-Christians. How this grieves God’s heart! There is work, ministry, marriage, and kids. All of these take time and energy. Consequently, unless we are intentional, it is easy to neglect spiritual preparation. Yet we are not meant to be spiritual Rip van Winkles. Stop living in silk pajamas! Stay awake.<sup>31</sup> Today, are you ready for Christ to return? Tomorrow? What if He were to return in the next 24 hours, would you be ready or would you be ashamed to see Him? *Don’t get caught sleeping!*

When I was a student at Multnomah Bible College, I had the tendency to stay up awfully late. One such night, I stayed up until about 3:00 and woke up at 6:00 for an early class. The class was Christology/Soteriology (i.e., the study of Christ and salvation) taught by Dr. Joseph Wong. I can't think of a more important class that anyone could take. Unfortunately, I was dead tired. This particular morning, Dr. Wong invited Dr. Willard Aldrich to teach. I went in, sat down, and promptly fell asleep. The next thing I remember was Dr. Aldrich walking toward me as the class emptied out. As I came to, I noticed a pool of drool covering my chest that soaked through my flannel shirt and thermal onto my bare skin! How a person could drool this much, I'll never know! Needless to say, I was humiliated! My so-called "friends" didn't even have the decency or common courtesy to wake me during class or at least before the class ended. Dr. Aldrich is the co-founder of MBC and the father of Dr. Joe Aldrich (the president while I was there). And I fell asleep on him. What a nightmare! Although this was one of the more embarrassing moments of my life, what will it be like to be found in a state of sleep when Jesus Christ, the founder of our life and faith returns? Consider yourself warned, *don't get caught sleeping!*

Verse 7 explains the exhortation in 5:6. Paul now urges us to "clean up." He writes, **"For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night."** The stress is not merely on not getting drunk (Eph 5:18), but on the self-control and alertness that should mark a soldier on duty.<sup>32</sup> Paul's point is that our behavior should NOT be characterized by the sin of unbelievers. Many Christians, myself included, have in a moment of temptation, thought, "Do I want to be doing this when Christ returns?" When the answer is a resounding, "NO!" it is easier to reject the temptation. Instead, we are challenged to so love Christ that when He comes we will be found doing the things that earn His praise, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt 25:21), rather than the rebuke that will be extended to those who are ashamed at His coming (1 John 2:28).

With this motivation in mind, Paul says, "Dress up."<sup>33</sup> In 5:8 he writes, **"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."**<sup>34</sup> The language of 5:8 is not drawn from the garb of Roman soldiers as many suspect. Rather, it comes from Isaiah 59:17 (cf. Eph 6:14-17) and refers to the Lord's spiritual armor.<sup>35</sup> The breastplate and helmet are basically defensive. They can guard against our enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil. In this context, the breastplate has two features: faith and love. "Faith" protects the heart. If we live by faith, we will be spiritually stable in spiritual war. Faith and faithfulness will help us persevere until Jesus returns. "Love" is the other side of the breastplate. Our faith must result in love. In 2 Tim 4:8, Paul says we are to love Christ's appearing and anticipate the crown of righteousness. This will arm us against broken relationships. "If you knew Jesus was going to return today and had only one phone call you could make, who would you call and what would you say? Why are you waiting?" In 2005, Joshua Witter, a 25-year-old atheist living in Orlando started a business called "The Post-Rapture Post."<sup>36</sup> This creative business bills itself as "the postal service of the saved." For as little as \$4.99, Witter offers to deliver your letters to friends and loved ones left behind after the rapture. On his site, he asks, "Do you want to take the chance that your loved ones will have to suffer through your ascension into Heaven without knowing how you really feel in your heart? Sign up for the Post-Rapture Post today to guarantee that, while you are gone, you will remain in the thoughts of those left behind."<sup>37</sup> As inexpensive and clever as this business is, I hope and pray that you will be courageous in communicating your feelings to your loved ones and those who don't know Christ, before the rapture. May we never require the Post-Rapture-Post. *Don't get caught sleeping!* Live out your love today before it is too late.

Paul also writes that we are to put on a helmet, which is "the hope of salvation." This protects the mind and produces clear thinking. What is the "hope of salvation?" It is the certainty that if we die before Jesus returns, we who believe will go directly to heaven. If we live until Christ's return, it is the certainty that we will be raptured off this earth to meet Him in the air. Either way we're going to be delivered—whether alive or dead. We're going to meet Jesus very soon. So *don't get caught sleeping!*

In 5:9-10, Paul explains why believers will be saved from God's wrath. He writes, **"For God has not destined us for wrath,<sup>38</sup> but for obtaining salvation [deliverance] through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him."** The "wrath" in this context almost certainly carries a double entendre force to it: both the Tribulation period and eternal wrath (hell). Believers are not destined for either. This promise extends even to those believers who are not alert (5:10). A state of non-alertness affects present sanctification, but has no impact on the time of future glorification.<sup>39</sup> Most scholars agree that the "wrath" under consideration refers to hell, so I don't need to explain this interpretation. However, the view that Paul is also referring to the Tribulation requires contextual support.<sup>40</sup> This can be found in the immediate context of 5:2-3 where the day of the Lord is mentioned. This view is also confirmed in 1:10 where Paul clearly lays out the third and final outline point of his book. Paul states that we are "to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come."<sup>41</sup> The arrival of the last days brings two contrasting experiences: rescue versus ruin.<sup>42</sup> Those who believe in Christ are destined for rescue, the world for ruin. This destiny not only belongs to those Christians who are wide awake when Christ comes, but also to those who are sound asleep!<sup>43</sup> And notice "we will live together with Him." In short, Christ's return delivers all believers! Heaven is surely a place, but it is first and foremost being with a person—Jesus. Christianity is a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

This raises an important question: Is it permissible to sluff off? Absolutely not! Imagine that the president chose you to be an ambassador to China during the Olympics. He promised you a great reward if you would represent America well. You probably wouldn't say, "I'm not going to do anything. I'm just going to live for myself. After all, I'm an American citizen and no one can take my citizenship away! No! You would be filled with gratitude and the prospect of great reward would surely motivate you. Likewise, we should feel an incredible sense of gratitude and obligation to the Lord. God's unconditional love and grace ought to motivate you and me to a life of good works.

Our passage closes in 5:11 with two commands and a word of affirmation: **"Therefore encourage one another and build up one another,<sup>44</sup> just as you also are doing."** Does this sound familiar? It should! Paul concluded his previous section (4:13-18) in the same way—"encourage one another" (4:18).<sup>45</sup> Obviously, Paul considers encouragement an important theme.<sup>46</sup> Along with encouragement, Paul also urges the Thessalonians to "build up one another." The word translated "build up" (*oikodomeo*) originally meant "to build a house." In the New Testament, it is used of building in a spiritual sense.<sup>47</sup> But the idea is to build up other believers like you would build up a house. To use the building metaphor, this means you lay a foundation of discipleship and construct a life built upon God's Word. It is also worth noting that the terms translated "encourage" and "build up" are in the present tense. This implies continuous action. We need to continually "encourage" and "build up" our fellow believers. Moreover, these words are commands, not suggestions or options. Fortunately, the Thessalonians are fulfilling these commandments. Paul tells them to simply keep doing what they are already doing. Similarly, I could say to you, "You are doing a great job encouraging and building up other believers in the light of Christ's return. But don't give up now. Keep on keeping on!" You and I must never relax on the grounds that we have made sufficient progress. We must press on to the high calling of Christ Jesus (Phil 3:12-14). We are to encourage and build up one another until Jesus returns (Heb 10:24-25). How can we tangibly do this?

- ***Believe in other believers.*** In this passage, Paul shares at least ten positive truths that are applicable to believers like you and me.<sup>48</sup> Several truths stand out. If you have believed in Christ, you are a son of day and light. You are sober and watchful. You are wearing faith, love, and hope. Christ died for you. You will spend eternity with other believers. We need to believe these truths about other believers. I will always remember the people who believed in me before believing in me seemed acceptable or cool. Those people will always have a special place in my heart. For you, perhaps it was a parent, a teacher, a coach, or a pastor. Regardless, our goal must be to see spiritual potential in people whether it is fully developed or not.

- ***Read the Word for other believers.*** We are typically told to read the Bible for our own personal enrichment. This is well and good. I always allow God to work His Word in me before I even think of sharing it with anyone else. Yet, it is too easy to be individualistic and neglect the corporate disciplines.<sup>49</sup> Practically speaking, there are times when we may not want to read the Bible for ourselves, but we may read it so that we can edify someone else. Ask the Lord to encourage you so that you can be built up to encourage another brother or sister from the Word.
- ***Hang out with other believers.*** Many Christians come to church discouraged and defeated. Some come disenchanted about life. Our warm encouragement might be just what they need that day. When the worship service is over, do you charge for the nearest door or do you head for people who need encouragement?<sup>50</sup> Why not stick around on Sunday morning or Wednesday evening or whenever the church gathers? Two of our young members, Jason Lucarelli and Andrew Pratt, have a Costco pizza ministry that seeks to build up young men and assimilate them into the body of Christ. Every Sunday, Jason and Andrew purchase three large pizzas and enough pop to feed the men who come out. This past Sunday, my entire family had lunch with these men. We were astounded at their generosity. We were also impressed by their willingness to serve us. They ran to get napkins, refill drinks, etc. They are building community in one of the most impressive ways I have seen.
- ***Persevere in your faith for other believers.*** My friend, Patrick Sprout, has said, “The greatest thing I can do for a friend is to ensure that I walk with God.” This is true. Do you want to encourage and build up the body? Persevere in your own faith. It is the greatest gift that you can give another believer. This past Wednesday morning, I was in the sanctuary praying when Bill Andrews, one of our serving seniors, came in to prepare and organize the pens and Bibles for Sunday morning. As I was watching Bill, I couldn’t help but think, “What if Christ returns while Bill is serving?” Before I left I said, “Bill, I just prayed to God that as I age, I will be like you. I won’t always have the strength to preach, but I hope I have a heart to serve.” Bill is keeping the faith and persevering in his walk with Christ. Men like Bill Andrews are an inspiration and challenge to me. They are finishing well.

Idaho businessman Don Bennett was the first amputee to climb to the summit of Mount Rainier. That’s 14,410 feet, on one leg and two crutches! During a difficult portion of the climb, Bennett and his team had to cross an ice field. To get across the ice, the climbers had to put spikes on their boots to prevent slipping and to dig into the ice for leverage and stability. Unfortunately, with only one spiked boot and two crutches, the only way Bennett could figure to get across the ice field was to fall face forward onto the ice, pull himself as far forward as he could, stand up, and then fall forward again. On this particular climb, his teenage daughter, Kathy, happened to be with him, and she saw what was happening to her dad. Kathy stayed by her dad’s side through the entire four-hour struggle and shouted in his ear: “You can do it, Dad. You’re the best dad in the world. You can do it, Dad!” Kathy Bennett’s belief in her father and her verbal encouragement touched a place deep within her dad, strengthening his resolve and commitment. Consequently, he finished.<sup>51</sup>

Will you help other brothers and sisters finish their climb? Will you speak words of hope and affirmation into their lives? Will you wake up to opportunities around you? Will you go into this week with a renewed passion for Christ’s return? You can single-handedly make an eternal difference in someone’s life. Please don’t be guilty of sleep walking. Live today as if Jesus could return because He just might.

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### **Scripture References**

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11  
Luke 21:34-36  
Revelation 3:3; 16:15  
Romans 13:11-14  
Ephesians 6:10-20  
Ephesians 4:29-32  
1 Peter 4:7-11

### **Study Questions**

1. How much end-times preaching or teaching have I listened to in the course of my Christian life (5:1-3)? Have I digested and appropriated the insights and the truth I have received? Read Luke 12:48b. If so, what specific and tangible attitudes and actions have I implemented? During my Christian life how much time have I spent studying the end-times? What have I learned? How has this information led to transformation in my life?
2. Does the reality of impending Tribulation judgment upon unbelievers shake me to my core (5:3)? What unsaved relatives, friends, coworkers, and neighbors can I share the good news of Jesus Christ with? How will my awareness of what awaits the unbelievers I know and love motivate me to share the love and grace of Jesus? Since many unchurched people have an interest in the end-times, how can I use this topic in my spiritual conversations? Read Colossians 4:5-6.
3. What is my spiritual opinion of myself? If I have trusted in Jesus Christ, do I have a healthy, biblical understanding that I am a son or daughter of light (5:4-5)? Since Christ has forgiven my sins, have I forgiven myself? Am I still making excuses for why I can't serve Christ because of sins and failures from my past? How can I be "light" to those around me? Would my family members, friends, coworkers, and neighbors consider me a son or daughter of light? Why or why not?
4. Am I ready for Jesus to return? Read 1 John 2:28 and 2 Corinthians 5:10. In what area of my life am I a spiritual sleepwalker who has been intoxicated by the world (5:6-7)? What personal steps can I take to return to fellowship and intimacy with Christ? Who can help me grow in my relationship with Christ? Will I contact this person today and ask for his or her assistance?
5. In what ways am I presently seeking to "encourage" and "build up" my fellow believers (5:11)? Read Hebrews 10:24-25. How can I intentionally spur other believers on to love and good deeds as the day of Christ's return draws near? Am I actively involved in other people's lives? If so, how? Do I attend a small group? Am I serving in some capacity? Am I a friend to those who need encouragement and strength?

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Sam Gordon, *Hope and Glory*. Truth for Today (Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2005), 177.

<sup>2</sup> The breakdown is as follows: 28.5% of the OT and 21.5% of the NT. See J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 674-75.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Jeffress, *As Time Runs Out* (Nashville: Broadman, 1999), 10.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thess 4:13-18 offered instruction concerning the dead in Christ, while 5:11-11 gives a word of needed exhortation to the living.

<sup>5</sup> Paul turns to a new subject with his use of *peri de* ("now as to"), yet 1 Thess 5:1-11 is not completely distinct from 1 Thess 4:13-18.

<sup>6</sup> Paul uses the noun *chronos* in Rom 7:1; 16:25; 1 Cor 7:39; 16:7; Gal 4:1, 4; 1 Thess 5:1; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 1:2; and Jude 18. The terms *chronos* and *kairos* (see below) are used in Eccl 3:1-8; Dan 2:21; and Acts 1:7.

<sup>7</sup> Paul uses the noun *kairos* in Rom 3:26; 5:6; 8:18; 9:9; 11:5; 13:11; 1 Cor 4:5; 7:5, 29; 2 Cor 6:2; 8:14; Gal 4:10; 6:9, 10; Eph 1:10; 2:12; 5:16; 6:18; Col 4:5; 1 Thess 2:17; 5:1; 2 Thess 2:6; 1 Tim 2:6; 4:1; 6:15; 2 Tim 3:1; 4:3, 6; and Titus 1:3. Thomas notes that *kairos* "very frequently refers to this future period (Dan 9:27, LXX; Mark 13:33; Luke 21:8, 24; Eph 1:10; 1 Tim 6:15; Titus 1:3; Heb 9:10; Rev 1:3; 11:18; 22:10)." Robert L. Thomas, "1 Thessalonians," In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), Electronic ed.

<sup>8</sup> In 1 Thess, Paul uses the word *oida* ("know") 13 times (1:4, 5; 2:1, 2, 5, 11; 3:3, 4; 4:2, 4, 5; 5:2, 12).

<sup>9</sup> The word *akribos* ("full well") is only used by Paul elsewhere in Eph 5:15: "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise."

<sup>10</sup> Thomas writes, "*Erchetai* ("will come") is a vivid futuristic present (cf. John 14:3) to portray the day as already on its way with an arrival anticipated any time (cf. 1 Thess 1:10)." Thomas, "1 Thessalonians."

<sup>11</sup> This was the message of the false prophets of Jeremiah's day (Jer 6:14; 8:11, 28). For a fuller explanation see G.K. Beale, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 142-43.

<sup>12</sup> Holmes correctly notes, "'Destruction' (or perhaps 'disaster') can indicate loss of property, death, or eternal punishment. In 2 Thessalonians 1:9, the phrase 'eternal destruction' stands as the opposite of 'eternal life.' Here, however, where the adjective is 'sudden' rather than 'eternal,' the idea seems to be one of some sort of historical catastrophe or disaster, perhaps as a foreshadowing or anticipation of an eternal loss or judgment to follow." Michael W. Holmes, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 167. *Contra* Beale, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 144.

<sup>13</sup> The word *aiaphnidios* ("suddenly") is used elsewhere only in Luke 21:34 where Jesus says, "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap."

<sup>14</sup> See Isa 13:6-13; Jer 4:31; and Micah 4:9-10. The early part of this day of the Lord was called "the beginning of sorrows" by the Lord Jesus (Matt 24:8).

<sup>15</sup> This is a double negative (*ou me*) and means "never, no, under no circumstances" (cf. Rom 2:3 and Heb 2:3).

<sup>16</sup> See Amos 5:18ff; Joel 2:1ff.; Zeph 1:14-18; and Isa 2:12-21. Another term for this period is "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer 30:7). Many prophetic students also call it the Tribulation and point to Rev 6-19 as the Scripture that most vividly describes this event.

<sup>17</sup> Jesus used a thief coming at night as an illustration of the unexpected and hostile nature of the coming of God's judgment in the future (Matt 24:43; Luke 12:33, 39). This is also repeated in various ways in 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; and 16:15.

<sup>18</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Thessalonians: The Gospel & the End of Time*. The Bible speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1994), 109.

<sup>19</sup> At the same time, God will prepare Israel for the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to establish His kingdom.

<sup>20</sup> Gordon, *Hope and Glory*, 184.

<sup>21</sup> This sentence gives emphasis to "you." It would be sufficient for the Greek to say *este* ("you are"). Yet, in both 1 Thess 5:4 and 5, Paul has *humeis* plus *este* ("you" plus "you are"). The sentence gives emphasis to "you."

<sup>22</sup> The word "you" (*humeis*) is emphatically placed as the first word in the sentence.

<sup>23</sup> BDAG s.v. *katalambano* 3b: "to come upon someone, with implication of surprise, catch." Various English versions translate the word "surprise" (e.g., ESV, NRSV, NIV).

<sup>24</sup> Hodges writes, "The timing of the rapture does not rely solely upon the reference to the Day of the Lord coming as a thief. Instead, it is framed within the larger picture of a world that is both unconcerned and undisturbed. The

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time-frame to which Paul's words apply is the time period before the Tribulation begins." Zane C. Hodges, "1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and the Rapture," *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 6 (October-December 2000): 29.

<sup>25</sup> See also Grant C. Richison, *1 Thessalonians* (<http://www.gracenotes.info/> 1997), 111-12.

<sup>26</sup> David Jackman, *The Authentic Church* (Great Britain: Christian Focus 1998), 115.

<sup>27</sup> The term "others" refers back to unbelievers who are without hope in 1 Thess 4:13.

<sup>28</sup> Paul uses the term *gregoreo* ("alert") in 1 Cor 16:13; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:6, 10; cf. Matt 24:42, 43; 25:13; 26:38, 40, 41; Mark 13:34, 35, 37; 14:34, 37, 38; Luke 12:37; Acts 20:31; 1 Pet 5:8; Rev 3:2, 3; and 16:15. BDAG s.v. *gregoreo* 2: "to be in constant readiness be on the alert." In the NT, the verb *gregoreo* never refers to physical life. The English name Gregory comes from this Greek word. Perhaps every time we meet someone named Gregory or Greg we should be reminded to watch for Jesus' return.

<sup>29</sup> Paul uses the term *nepho* ("sober") in 1 Thess 5:6, 8; 2 Tim 4:5; cf. 1 Pet 1:13; 4:7; and 5:8.

<sup>30</sup> Paul uses the Greek word *katheudo* ("sleep") in 1 Thess 5:6, 7 [2x], 10; and Eph 5:15. In each of these usages, Paul has ethical behavior in mind. In 1 Thess 4:14, Paul uses a different Greek word translated "sleep" (*koimao*) to refer to the death of believers. This word never has ethical connotations. Paul's choice of words is quite deliberate. For further study and insight, see Thomas R. Edgar, "The Meaning of 'Sleep' in 1 Thessalonians 5:10," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22:4 (December 1979): 345-49. See also the author's revised article: Thomas R. Edgar, "Lethargic or Dead in 1 Thessalonians 5:10?" *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 6.4 (Sept-Dec 2000): 36-51.

<sup>31</sup> Gordon, *Hope and Glory*, 187.

<sup>32</sup> See 2 Tim 2:3-4.

<sup>33</sup> The three exhortations of 1 Thess 5:6-8 are from Ray Pritchard, "Like a Thief in the Night" (1 Thess 5:1-11): <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1996-11-10-Like-a-Thief-in-the-Night/>.

<sup>34</sup> The three "graces" of faith, hope, and love occupy a central place in the Christian life as is expressed also in 1:3. Here they are the defensive armor of the Christian. On Christian armor, see Rom 13:12f; 2 Cor 6:7; 10:4; Eph 6:13f.; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 2:3-4; and 4:7.

<sup>35</sup> See also Thomas, "1 Thessalonians"; Holmes, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 168.

<sup>36</sup> See <http://postrapturepost.com/>.

<sup>37</sup> *SermonNews* citation from *USA Today*, May 9, 2007. See [www.sermonnews.com](http://www.sermonnews.com).

<sup>38</sup> In context this refers to the outpouring of God's "wrath" on the earth in the day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:2-4).

<sup>39</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, "1 Thessalonians: Introduction, Outline, and Argument": [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=1335](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=1335).

<sup>40</sup> *Contra* Mayhue who is "certain that he [Paul] refers to God's eternal wrath here." Richard Mayhue, *First and Second Thessalonians*. Focus on the Bible (Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1999), 135.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Thess 5:10 does not contrast the living with the dead, but rather, watchful with unwatchful believers!

<sup>42</sup> Hodges, "1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and the Rapture," 33.

<sup>43</sup> This view obliterates the partial rapture theory.

<sup>44</sup> The Greek phrase *eis ton hena* ("one [to] one") is equivalent to *allelous* but emphasizes the distributive nature of the task—each one is to do it—and also that it is to be a one-to-one activity as well as communal.

<sup>45</sup> Scholars call this an *inclusio*: a literary framing device in which the same word or phrase stands at the beginning and the end of the section (e.g., 1 Thess 4:18 and 5:11). For visual purposes, I like to call *inclusios* "bookends" or a "sandwich."

<sup>46</sup> Paul uses the term *parakaleo* ("encourage") eight times in 1 Thess alone (2:12; 3:2, 7; 4:1, 10, 18; 5:11, 14).

<sup>47</sup> Paul uses the word *oikodomeo* ("build up") in Rom 15:20; 1 Cor 8:1, 10; 10:23; 14:4, 17; Gal 2:18; and 1 Thess 5:11.

<sup>48</sup> Mayhue, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 136.

<sup>49</sup> To read more see Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1996).

<sup>50</sup> Richison, *1 Thessalonians*, 117.

<sup>51</sup> Preaching Today citation: James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *Encouraging the Heart: A Leader's Guide to Rewarding and Recognizing Others* (Jossey-Bass, 1999); Van Morris, Mount Washington, KY.