

Ready for That Day

1 Thessalonians 5:1—11

Introduction

While the season of Advent has not yet begun, these last few Sundays of the Church year are spent looking to the Second Coming of Christ. But the focus is slightly different. During Advent, we are preparing our hearts to receive Christ anew. During these last Sundays, we are thinking about Judgment and being ready for His coming. Paul tells us in **1 Thessalonians 5** that *the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2)*, quickly, when we least expect Him. And he admonishes us to be ready.

Black and White

For Paul, the line was clear. There were no shades of gray. Everything was black and white. I know that's not popular today. Everyone likes shades of gray, with no real, objective truth. When things are black and white, that means there is an objective truth. Paul believed what Jesus said, *"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6)*.

Darkness and Light

The first pair of opposites, or dichotomy, is darkness or light. The thief comes at night, under the cloak of darkness. He sneaks in and surprises the members of the household. If they had been expecting him or been able to see him coming, he would not have been successful. The thief depends on the element of surprise. Christ comes like a thief in the night, not sneaking, but surprising a darkened world that doesn't see Him coming. In fact, He has already come (Read **John 1:4—5, 9—10**). But we *are not in darkness (1 Thessalonians 5:4)* since we are in Christ, the Light and Source of Light.

Asleep or Awake?

The next dichotomy is asleep or awake. People sleep at night, in the darkness. But if we are in the Light, the daytime, why does Paul admonish us to stay awake? Because people can sleep in the daytime, too. When I worked third shift, I slept in the daytime, whether I wanted to or not. After working one Saturday night, I decided I would go to church, so I did ... and fell asleep. We sleep when we are tired, and when we are secure. Because Christ has tarried so long, we may be tempted to not even think about His Second Coming and live in the false security of thinking we have "all the time in the world." Wake up! And look up! For He is coming back, and we don't know when.

Drunk or Sober?

The final dichotomy is drunk or sober. Some have used this passage to say that Paul is advocating abstinence. Paul actually prescribed wine for Timothy for *the sake of his stomach and frequent ailments (1 Timothy 5:23)*. Here he is talking about being drunk, and not just on alcohol. People can get drunk on other things, as well. Being drunk means having inhibitions lowered. If you put a frog in a pot of boiling water, he will splash around and try to get out because the water is burning him. But if you put him in a pot of lukewarm water, he is happy. Gradually turn up the heat and he will not notice it. When it boils, it

will kill him without him resisting. That's the way it is with sin. In our society, what one generation abhorred, the next tolerated, the one after that accepted, and the last one celebrated. Don't be a frog.

We Belong to the Day

The simple fact is *we belong to the day* (**1 Thessalonians 5:8**). We don't just walk in the Light. We belong to Him. By the right of creation, He owns us. But it goes far deeper than that. In sin, we have fallen away from Him, left Him, denied belonging to Him. Because Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sin, He has redeemed us, *bought us back with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death* (**Small Catechism, Apostles' Creed: Article II**). And He has given us the means to stay awake and sober.

Breastplate of Faith and Love

Paul refers to these as breastplate and helmet. The breastplate protects the heart, lungs, and other vital organs. The helmet protects the head. These were the two most important pieces of armor a Roman soldier wore. Faith and love protect our heart. *Faith comes from hearing the Word* (**Romans 10:17**). When we stay in the Word, we stay in the faith. The Word also shows us how to love.

Helmet of Hope of Salvation

We sing, *"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; no merit of my own I claim, but wholly lean on Jesus' name"* (**LSB #576**). This hope is not wishful thinking, but it is a blessed assurance based on the fact of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and His resurrection, as evidenced by the empty tomb. We are reminded of that hope every time we receive the Lord's Supper. *"As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes"* (**LSB Divine Services 1 & 2 from 1 Corinthians 11:25**). So, since we belong to the Light, let us stay awake and sober by continuing in the Word and Sacrament. And we will be **READY FOR THAT DAY**.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
