

5/21/23 Christ Fellowship

“The Day of the Lord” – 1 Thess. 5:1-11

Okay, here’s today’s scenario. Let’s say the city of Chico is going to do some major road work. Let’s say they are going to build a bridge over the railroad tracks over here so we don’t have to wait on the train anymore. We can just go over the bridge. That sure would be nice, wouldn’t it? So, they send out a mailer to everybody in Wise County and the mailer says the work will start pretty soon but they don’t know exactly when. But they warn you to be careful and be alert because it could happen at any time. And the first part of the project is to dig huge holes on both sides of the tracks so they can start the concrete construction for the bridge.

These will be massive holes that will wreck your car if you drive into them. Again, they don’t know when the work will start but it will be sometime this year. And every week or so, the city sends out warnings to be careful because the work is about to start. And they put up big orange signs on both sides of the tracks telling you to be aware. The work will start soon. It makes the local news. Be careful in Chico. The holes are about to be dug. And before they even start digging, they put out more signs and more flyers and then lights go up and they even put concrete barriers in the way and reroute all traffic with policemen all day every day.

But then, the day the holes are dug, some yahoo texting and driving somehow makes his way to the giant hole and drives right in, crashes and dies. What do you think about that guy? Do you think his family should sue the city? Is it Chico’s fault that poor man is dead? Should we all riot and protest at city hall? I hate that he’s dead. I hurt for his family. But what more could have been done, right?

Our text for today is from **1 Thessalonians 5** and it mentions the phrase, “*the day of the Lord.*” The day of the Lord is not to be confused with what we call the Lord’s Day, which is usually considered to be Sunday. The day of the Lord starts when all believers are raptured. It includes the seven-year period of Tribulation. It includes the Second Coming of Jesus and ends with the Great White Throne Judgment of all unbelievers. It is a horrible, horrible period of time if you are not a true Christian.

The day of the Lord is mentioned over and over again in scripture, from the Old Testament to the New Testament. **Isaiah 13:6** says, “*Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.*” **Joel chapter 2** says, “*I will pour out my Spirit in those days. 30 I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*” **Zephaniah 1** says, “*The great day of the Lord is near— near and*

coming quickly. The cry on the day of the Lord is bitter; the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry. 15 That day will be a day of wrath—a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness.” In **Matthew 24**, Jesus quotes that passage in Isaiah and then adds, *“For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again.”*

Over and over again, the world has been warned. The Bible mentions it many times not just in those verses but many others. Preachers and teachers have warned about it for centuries. Watch out, world! There is an end coming! We don’t know exactly when but it’s coming soon. Be alert. Be prepared. Don’t keep driving and fall into the hole. Please stop! But if you manage to ignore all the warnings and signs and pleas and cries...that is on you. And you will have eternity to regret it.

Now, that is the bad news. The good news is also found in this passage so let’s turn there if you haven’t already and let’s read **1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**. Paul is starting to close out the letter he wrote to this Greek church. He is starting to land the plane and he does so in a way that makes the choice black and white. There is a real hell and there is a real heaven. Make your pick now because the time is short and you may not have another day to choose. As we talked about last week, the rapture of the church is imminent. It could happen at any minute. But if that doesn’t get you, the death rate for this world is 100%. Let’s see how Paul words it.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 says, *“Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 8 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. 9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”*

Part of what Paul is doing here is giving us a plain and obvious contrast between believers and unbelievers. In the previous chapter, as we saw last week, he describes the rapture of the church into Heaven but says nobody knows or needs to know when it is going to happen. We just need to be ready and stay watchful.

He continues with this theme in **chapter 5, verse 1** by saying that, obviously, we don't even need to talk about when this will happen. And then we start to see the stark contrast between believers and unbelievers. And this contrast is a good thing. There should be a huge difference in the way we think and act and live and even die because there is a huge difference in our eternities.

Let me give you an illustration. Let's say you have a doctor's appointment and you are waiting in the waiting room to be called back. You had some tests run a few weeks ago and the doctor called you and said you have every kind of disease known to man and you have a very short time before you die a painful death. But he wants you to come in and he will explain all the details to you. There is no hope.

Now, contrast that to the doctor who calls you in and has gotten your test results back and says you are completely healed! You are healthier than ever before and he wants to show you the results and then have a pizza party with you to celebrate. How are those two people going to differ while waiting in the waiting room? There's going to be a big difference, right? The way they act is different and their outcomes are different and those differences are obvious.

The day of the Lord technically starts right after the rapture and then it continues on this earth through the Great Tribulation, the Second Coming of Jesus and includes and builds up to the Great White Throne judgment where all unbelievers are judged and thrown into hell. So, none of that past the rapture will affect us as Christians. At the rapture, we will meet Jesus and live with Him forever and ever, amen and all is well for us. No more tears. No more sorrow. No more pain.

But let's look at how Paul differentiates the two groups. He says one group is in darkness and the other group is in the light. Back in the days before electricity or even flashlights, a tightfisted old farmer was taking his hired man to task for carrying a lighted lantern when he went to call on his best girl. *"Why,"* he exclaimed, *"when I went a-courtin' I never carried one of them things. I always went in the dark."* *"Yes,"* the hired man said wryly, ***"and look what you got!"*** (sermonillustrations.com)

See, you can expect people to make bad choices when they are in the dark. I have said many times that sinners are going to sin. That's just what they do. They are slaves to sin. Just expect it. But they also just plain make bad decisions. Think about the world and the country that we are living in now. This country is in the dark. Our government is in the dark. We just learned this week that our FBI and DOJ and CIA and a bunch of elected officials made up a huge lie and used it to affect the outcome of the last two elections. Somewhere in some back room somebody thought that was a good idea.

California and some other states are thinking about giving financial reparations to black people in the millions of dollars per person. That sounds real nice in a way but there is no money to fund that. A lot of people think that is a good idea.

A lot of people think it's a good idea to have male drag performers put on risqué strip shows for elementary school kids or have drag performers read raunchy books to kindergarteners in the library. What could possibly be wrong with that, huh?

Some people think it's a good idea to just open up our borders and let anybody and everybody in, including terrorists and convicted felons and drug traffickers and human traffickers with every kind of disease. Sure, just come on in! No problem.

They want to legalize drugs and prostitution **and** they want to defund the police. None of that makes a lick of sense and yet that is exactly what is happening all over our country. And you can blame the democrats or you can blame the republicans but what it needs to be blamed on is a country that is living and trying to make decisions...in the dark. There is a moral and spiritual and even intellectual darkness that we are living in as a country and it is just to be expected. It is expected because that is what happens to a country that is not honoring God and it is expected even more so as the day of the Lord gets closer.

Paul compares this darkness to being asleep. See that in **verse 6**? Do you ever have a dream where you are doing something and in that dream what you are doing makes so much sense. This is just what has to be done, right? I obviously have to get to work riding that alligator. I mean, obviously. But then you wake up and think, *"That was just stupid. That didn't make any sense at all."* I feel sorry for people who go through their lives making decisions while they are asleep. They may be very intelligent people. They might be good people who care about others. But without a relationship with God through His Son Jesus, you are going through life sleepwalking.

But look at **verses 7-8** again. *For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 8 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 is telling us we need to get our hearts right and we need to get our heads right. This is not the extensive list he gives us in **Ephesians 6** of all the armor we need. This is just the basic stuff we have to have if we are going to live in these dark days. He says to put on faith and love as a breastplate. That protects your heart. And then put on the hope of salvation as a helmet to protect our minds.

But what does it look like to put on the breastplate of faith and love? I read a bunch of commentaries about how the breastplate is worn on the front and back for certain reasons and it does this and that and it is made of leather and steel. Whatever. I want to know what Todd has to do to live as a person of the light in these dark days. What do I have to do to put on faith and love?

Let me give you a real live example for today of what it means to put on faith and love as a breastplate. When I mentioned all the crazy stuff our country is doing these days with the government corruption, the drag shows in public schools, the open border and all the rest, how did that make you feel? It makes me mad. I love this country and there are a lot of people who want to tear it down and start over. I think of all the veterans of all the wars our country has ever fought and what a disgrace it is to their efforts. Our forefathers would be ashamed of what our country has become. And so there is a part of me that wants to get on social media and blast them all. I want to protest and riot and impeach everybody involved! We can't trust the government to protect our vote. Burn down the FBI and the CIA! Take our country back! Not on my watch! Blah, blah, blah.

And do you know what that does? Absolutely nothing. Well, it raises my blood pressure and heart rate but nothing constructive. Here is where my faith and love SHOULD come in. My faith is in the fact that God is in control and He loves me. My faith is in the fact that God established our governmental authority. That is what Paul wrote to the **Romans** in **chapter 13**. **1 Peter chapter 2** says basically the same thing. My faith is in the fact that God is using all of this to bring the day of the Lord closer and closer and I want that to happen. I'm ready for that. I'm looking forward to that. I have peace about that and so I have to trust God's process.

And because I see the process, I can show all people love and even at least try to say like Jesus did, *"Father, forgive them because they don't know what they are doing."* (Luke 23:24) They don't know what they are doing because they are in darkness. Bless their hearts. They can't see. They are spiritually blind and I hurt for them. I don't want them to be blind. I don't want them to ruin our country either but do you know how to make a spiritually blind person see? Is it by screaming at them from behind a keyboard on social media? Is it by calling our elected officials all kinds of nasty names? No. You make a spiritually blind person see by bringing them into the light and the only way you can do that is through love. I love you too much not to tell you the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ but I will speak even that truth with love. (Ephesians 4:15)

That is what it looks like to put on faith and love as a breastplate. And do you see how that protects your heart? It actually protects your physical heart by lowering your blood pressure back down but it protects your spiritual heart by being more like Jesus.

Then Paul says here in our text in **verse 8** to put on the helmet of the hope of salvation. Is he saying that if you are a good boy that you should hope you are saved? No. The Bible uses the word “hope” differently than we usually do in English. Biblical hope is a rock-ribbed knowledge of something that just hasn’t happened yet. It’s not the kind of hope that we use when we say, “*I hope it rains*” or “*I hope the Cowboys win.*”

When all else fails; when crazy liberals take over our country and run it in the ground and we elect a drag queen for president and Christians are being killed and put in prison, my hope is not in this world but in the fact that this world is not going to last. My hope is in my coming salvation out of this world and into Heaven with Jesus forever. It will be okay no matter what happens.

Now, trust me. I am still going to vote and I will still write my congressman respectfully and I will most definitely encourage everybody to do whatever it takes to get your kids and grandkids out of public schools because they are trying to spiritually kill them. We are still citizens and while we have our rights to do those things, I will do them. But my faith and my hope is not in anybody or anything in this world. I don’t care who becomes president. They are all corrupt. And they will all have to go through the day of the Lord.

But Paul says here in **verse 9** that “*God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” That word “salvation” means to be delivered. In this life we are delivered out of bondage to sin and out of the darkness that makes us make bad decisions. And in the next life, we are delivered to the doorstep of Heaven where every day is better than the last and every day we will get to be co-heirs with Jesus as it says in **Romans 8:17**. But as I read that again this past week I realized what the rest of the verse says. It says we are co-heirs with Jesus if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.

This world is hard. We will suffer. Everybody suffers, good Christians and horrible sinners. But we don’t have to walk around in darkness. Thank you, Lord! And we don’t have to walk around without hope or love or peace because our relationship with God through Jesus gives us all those things. I’ll close just like Paul did in this passage by saying, now, go encourage one another with these words.

Can you do that? Can you tell others of the hope you have in salvation no matter what is going on in this world? Can you encourage somebody by telling them of your faith that God is in control and He loves you? Can you love people enough to encourage them with these words? If not, maybe you don't have that relationship with Jesus. It's not religion. It's not church membership or tithing or baptism and anything. It is a person in the name of Jesus and He died for you because the Father said that where there was sin, something had to die. So, instead of you paying the price by spending eternity in Hell, Jesus paid the price and all you have to do is believe it. But that belief will be proven only when you give your whole life to Him and allow Him to forgive you of all your sins and then start to make you more like Him every day. Have you allowed Him to do that? Do it right now as the music plays.