

To the Saints of God at Topeka, Kansas

April 28, 2019

1 Thes. 5:1 ¶ *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 6 ¶ Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*

11 ¶ *Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. 12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. 14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. 15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.*

16 ¶ *Rejoice evermore. 17 Pray without ceasing. 18 In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

We have had several sermons of late regarding issues raised in 1 Thes. 5. I have been planning for a number of weeks to preach on this chapter so it is nice that there is some continuity here with these previous sermons.



Thessalonica was a city in Macedonia. It was above the country of Greece. Paul had a very cordial and dear relationship with the people in the church at Thessalonica. It was a mutual love. Paul stayed about three weeks (Acts 17:2) at Thessalonica. He stayed there while he healed from the vicious wounds he received at Philippi. I believe that they tended to Paul's wounds and helped him. Philippi is where Paul met Lydia and where he cast out the demon from the woman

that made her masters much money. Philippi is also where they said that he "troubled" the city and they nearly beat him to death (above 39 stripes) and cast him into prison. This is where he and Silas prayed and sang praises to God (Rejoice evermore) and there was an earthquake and God loosed their bonds (and where the Lord saved the Philippian jailer). Of course, all the time Paul was at Thessalonica he was preaching and by the end of the three weeks the Jews were so mad at him preaching Christ that the church members there had to sneak him out of the city and get him to Berea. This was like the underground railroad in the South during the Civil War. Thessalonica is where the Jews moved with envy and took to them lewd fellows of the baser sort and put the city in an uproar and sought to arrest and beat Paul but they could not find him so instead they assaulted the house of Jason and required a bond (Acts 17:5). In adversity we sometimes bond with people (Prov. 17:17 *A brother is born for adversity*). Paul bonded with these men and women in Thessalonica.

Paul tried twice to get back to Thessalonica and at 1Thes. 2:18 he says that "Satan hindered us" from getting there. So, in his stead, Paul sent Timothy to check on them and Timothy brought back a good report. 1 Thes. 3:6 *But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, **and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity/love,*** ("how's the church? – well, their faith and charity is good – then the church is good – it's no accident that these two key drivers of the church are positive) *and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: 7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress, by your faith.* It comforted Paul greatly to know that the church was still going there and that Timothy had good things to say about the state of their souls. Here is more strong talk from Paul about the people at Thessalonica. 1Thes. 3:9 *For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; 10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith? 11 ¶ Now God himself and*

our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. 12 **And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men,** even as we do toward you: 13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

1 Thes. 2:8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

So, while Paul desperately wanted to get back there so see them, he could not. So he writes this letter to them to comfort them, and to help them.

1 Thes. 5:1 ¶ *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*

There was a recent article where a man was interviewed, who I believe was Jewish. He said that he does not believe these things that we preach now, but if he sees any of these things that we preach, begin to come to pass, then, at that time, he will reconsider his position and reconsider, believing. It appears that some of our departed children believe they will be able to do the same thing. Beloved, they err not knowing the Scriptures. That is wrong thinking. There will be no opportunity for that. The Holy Spirit is crystal clear about this. Christ's coming will:

1) **Be as a thief in the night** – There will be no warning to the masses. It will occur when they are sleeping in spiritual darkness, and when they least expect it. 46% of burglaries happen at night where the cover of darkness brings security for the criminals. 95% of all burglaries have a forced entry – breaking a window, picking a lock or kicking in a door. Criminals want to strike when your guard is down. They intentionally give no indication they are coming and in fact take every precaution to prevent the homeowner from knowing they are coming;



2) **Sudden destruction** - Christ's coming will be quick and destructive. It will be like in football when the quarterback is sacked from the blind side – he never sees it coming. Or, in football when a receiver catches a ball over the middle of the field and as the receiver catches the ball they are leveled by a defensive player coming from the opposite direction. Or, one of these killer night tornadoes that strike in the

middle of the night with little warning and when everyone is sleeping. Or, the Flood or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah;

3) **Travail upon a woman with child** – I asked Shirl who tells me this is sharp, unavoidable pain that you cannot run from, and at points, it is “am-I-going-to-die pain?” and it comes fast, is unrelenting, show-stopping. Sometimes, while in a sound sleep then, - Boom! It comes out of nowhere. All reminding me, a few months ago, I had kidney stones. I was on the elliptical in my bedroom watching a movie with Luke. I had just started about 30 seconds previously and was going slow. I had a pain in my lower back. I thought “I’ll just run through this pain.” About 10 seconds later I stopped because it was increasing. 5 seconds later it was a freight train - I was on the floor with an excruciating pain that took my breath away and I called Shirl and the only words I could utter were “help.” And,

4) **They shall not escape** - No rocks, hills or mountains are going to shield the reprobate from the wrath of the Lamb or shield them from standing at the Judgment Seat of Christ. All around you it looks like a wonderful, peaceful, prosperous, safe place with not a single cloud in the sky. There will not be a speck of danger or concern. And the next thing you know there is water coming up past your eyeballs and you are drowning or there are fireballs reigning down from the sky. No where to run, nowhere to hide. 2Pe 2:9 *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:*

5) **It will be a time of peace and safety** - The implication is that Christ's coming will be at a time where there is great peace, safety, security and prosperity in the world. There will be an abundance of idleness. Christ is going to come beloved when there is great sinful



indulgence and carnal security. The people of this world are going to be called to the Great White Throne and Judgment-Bar of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords from their frolicking of sin, lust, concupiscence, thefts, lies, murders, deceit, adultery, fornication, and drunkenness and will stand naked, alone, in the filth of their sinful nature before God to be judged. Job 1:21 *And said, naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither.* 2 Cor. 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* 11 *Knowing therefore the terror of*

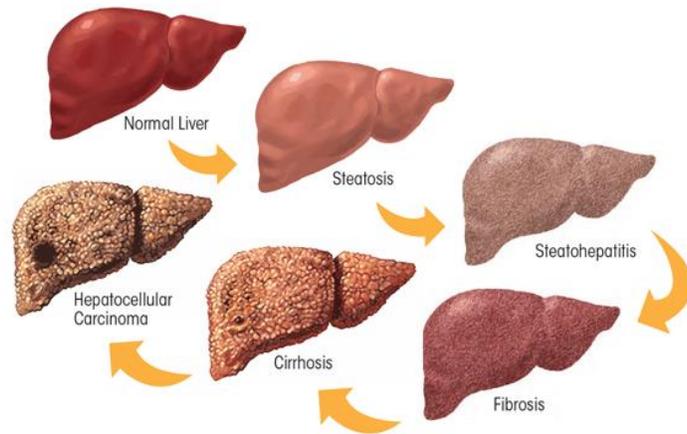
the Lord, we persuade men;

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 6 ¶ Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Steve did a sermon a few weeks ago on our duty to be sober. Here, Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they must be watchful and sober and be on their guard constantly. This is not a time to be taking your ease. This is not the time for surfeiting and drunkenness. This is not the time to be tending to the cares of this life (Luke 21:34). This is not the time for indulgences, for carnal lusts, for carelessness, for luke-warmness or for putting your feet up and taking it easy. Isaiah 33:14 *The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?*

My stepfather was in a constant state of drunkenness. I lived together with him in this state for about 10 years of my life. He could not hold a job, he could not earn a living, he could not be an effective parent, and he could not be an effective husband. His drunkenness consumed his life and those around him. His drunkenness was a vortex of awfulness. It was like a black hole that consumed all of us every day. A lot of people in this world try to

find happiness at the bottom of a bottle. Many of you that have grown up here have been sheltered from the horribleness of this self-affliction. Do not underestimate it and do not engage in it – you do it at your peril. I have many memories of my stepfather at family gatherings and public gatherings where he was drunk with his head falling in the mashed potatoes at Thanksgiving. Every single day he was drunk to one state or



another – he would stay up and drink and then sleep in the morning. When you drink like that you smell bad. And, while the liver is the second-largest organ in the body it has its limits. Alcohol has a bad effect on the liver and as you continue to drink and stress your liver you begin to turn yellow (because bile is building up in the body). And, then, one day my stepfather just died of liver failure. Game over. No second chance. He was also a great hater of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you drop your guard and start sleeping now you do it at your absolute peril. We must be wide awake. We must have all of our senses on high-alert. We must be fully engaged in the things of God. We must be waiting and looking for the return of Christ every day. We must look for Him, when for all appearance it looks like He is not coming. We must watch ourselves, our hearts, our loved ones, our church, our thoughts, our affections, our behavior and our words.

We must put on the breastplate or “chain mail” of **faith and love**. Eph. 6:14 *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.* Chain mail protects your vital organs like your heart. It protects us from the fiery darts of the wicked one. This is the faith of the God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of Christ and His people. Heb 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* 2

Cor. 5:14 – *For the love of Christ constraineth us.* Col. 3:14 *And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.* Col 2:2 *That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.* Eph. 4:1-3 *I therefore... of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*



Hope of Salvation

And for an helmet, the hope of salvation. A helmet protects your head. Your whole body can be intact but if you suffer a fatal blow to the head – there is no recovering from that. I have told you of my awful, high-speed skateboard crash going down a large hill at KU in my youth. I got the “death wobbles,” where the skateboard just uncontrollably starts shaking widely out of control. This happens at high speeds. Put “skateboards death wobbles” into Youtube.com and you will see some very ugly videos. I had a helmet on at the time. I fell very hard. Without the helmet there is an excellent chance I would have had long lasting injuries. Fatalities are also known to occur due to the death wobbles. The fall on the asphalt at 20-25 MPH split my helmet down the middle. I spent three-days in the hospital with a concussion. About a year later I had a bike wreck in a lower-speed accident but with no helmet and also spent 3 days in the hospital with a concussion.

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. **Hope** for salvation. Heb 10:35 *Cast not away, therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.* Having a proper hope of our salvation is a key to spiritual victory. Heb 11:6 *for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Titus 1:2 *In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;* Titus 2:13 *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;* Titus 3:7 *That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* In God bestowed/blessed faith we name these babies, so by that faith of her parents, we have a granddaughter whose name Zoe Hope keeps that hope of eternal life before us. We have such living reminders of our faith and hope all around us. Heb 3:6 *But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.* Heb 6:11 *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.* Heb 6:18 *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.* Heb 6:19

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1Pe 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. We must and do, every day hope for tokens of our Father's love and for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom 8:24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

As a soldier of Jesus Christ, we must believe that victory is ours and that we will prevail over our spiritual adversaries. Numbers 23:21 *He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. 22 God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.*

I wear a helmet now when I bike. Helmets are important. Helmets are particularly important when you go into battle. When you are fighting a war, you should have your helmet on. This is not hyperbolic talk I am telling you. There are actual casualties in this war. These very pews were once full of people that sat in them that no longer sit in them. They are gone – like the seed that fell by the way, was trodden down, devoured by the fowls of the air, which fell upon rocks, which sprung up for a time but lacking moisture, they withered away, and that which fell among thorns and was choked (Luke 8:5-7). The seed was there for a while, but eventually it blew away.

“Right now, as I speak, there is raging a war between the Saint and Satan, and that so bloody a one, that the cruelest which ever was fought by men, will be found by sport and child's play to this... It is a spiritual war we are in... The stage whereon this war is fought, is every man's soul. There is no neutral party in this war. The whole world is engaged in this quarrel of the covenant, either for God against Satan or for Satan against God.” - William Gurnell.



2 Tim 2:3 *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.* We must not allow our spiritual enemies to take our crown from us, or us to lay our weapons down and give up or to drown in our own slough of despond (Pilgrim's Progress). We must

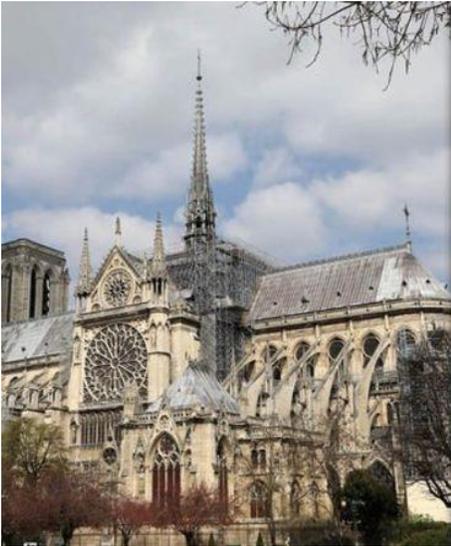
hope to the end! Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. Hope for salvation.

9 *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.* Here is a reason why we should have hope of salvation – God hath not appointed us to wrath but we will obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ! Christ died for us! For God's elect, that is, all those for whom Christ died, are always safe whether awake or sleep, where ever we go and whatever we do.

1 Thes. 5:11 ¶ *Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and **edify one another**, even as also ye do.*

“Wherefore” looks back to what just came previously. We are to comfort one another with the understanding the Christ is returning and that He died for us and that we live together with Him. “Edify one another” has the same meaning as Mal.3: 16 **Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another:** *and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. 17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. 18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.* To edify one another is to build up, grow, instruct, educate, and teach each other about God. Learn-Do-Teach. We are to pray together. We are to talk to one another everyday about the Scriptures of God, the things of God, the doctrines of God, and the falling-out of God's providence.

We need to avoid and forebear conversations that tear down, that amount to flattery, that are disruptive to unity, that disrupt the peace and tranquility of the church, that sow discord among the brethren, and which constitute corrupt communication. This is one house unto God. Eph 2: 19 *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also*



are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. We have no separate interests – but are unified and fitly framed together unto an holy temple in the Lord.

Notre Dame, the 800-year-old, medieval Catholic cathedral in Paris

burned last week. The Lord did that. God doesn't dwell there. Acts 17:24 *God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands. Mat. 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* He dwells with his people, not in some monstrosity that is a monument to man and their filthy works. That monstrosity was built on the backs and blood of a lot of people. They say it will take \$1 billion to rebuild it – why bother?

Matthew Henry: *As Christians are lively stones built up together a spiritual house, they should endeavour to promote the good of the whole church by promoting the work of grace in one another. And it is the duty of every one of us to study that which is for the edification of those with whom we converse, to please all men for their real profit. We should communicate our knowledge and experiences one to another. We should join in prayer and praise one with another. We should set a good example one before another. And it is the duty of those especially who live in the same vicinity and family thus to comfort and edify one another; and this is the best neighbourhood, the best means to answer the end of society. Such as are nearly related together and have affection for one another, as they have the greatest opportunity, so they are under the greatest obligation, to do this kindness one to another. This the Thessalonians did (which also you do), and this is what they are*

exhorted to continue and increase in doing. Note, Those who do that which is good have need of further exhortations to excite them to do good, to do more good, as well as continue in doing what they do.

I love you all. Amen.