

1 Thessalonians Chapter 5

Opening Remarks

Welcome back to our 1 Thessalonians series! Dr. Scott shared with me that you received him with much grace last week, and he truly enjoyed his first time of study and reflection with you.

I have been looking forward to *this* night for quite a while! And, as always, the video of tonight's session and our slides and notes will be available to you later this week at rockymountchurch.com/raw. Given the amount of information on the slides, you will definitely want to review them after we add them to the website.

We are going to study two reasons for hope this evening: 1) First, we will study the hope of the Rapture; 2) Second, we will study the hope of living in Christ and in the joy of the Holy Spirit – and we will receive *direct* instructions for living the life of hope that Christ has planned for us.

The Spirit of God, through the penmanship of the Apostle Paul, said this in the preceding chapter (**1 Thessalonians 4:13**), “We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, concerning those who are asleep,

so that you will not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.” We can learn several things from this verse: 1) Those asleep in Christ – those who have passed before us – are away from the body but they are present with the Lord (**2 Corinthians 5:8**); 2) Our hope is in the One who rescues us; 3) We should be comforted that Jesus will come to this Earth for His Church. We will concentrate of the final part of this hope in Christ tonight.

Let’s Pray before we begin.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

The Day of the Lord

5 About the times and the seasons: Brothers and sisters, you do not need anything to be written to you. **2** For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. **3** When they say, “Peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. **4** But you, brothers and sisters, are not in the dark, for this day to surprise you like a thief. **5** For you are all children of light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or the darkness. **6** So then, let us not sleep, like the rest, but let us stay awake and be self-controlled. **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 self-controlled and put on the armor of faith and love, and a helmet of the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who 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 as you are already doing.

Okay, that is a long passage and there is a lot to consider here, but the first thing I want you to notice is that Paul is talking to his brothers and sisters in Christ *about how they are to live* while they wait for the Day of the Lord. This will also prompt an even more detailed exhortation in the next passage, but let's handle this one first!

To understand Chapter 5, we again go back to 1 Thessalonians' fourth chapter, this time to the 17th Verse (**1 Thessalonians 4:17**): "Then we who are still alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord." (See Slide 1).

So, let's talk about what this "caught up together" means and then talk about the *timing* of these events. The word "Rapture" is derived from the Latin *rapio* (rah-pee-o), which is translated from the Greek *harpazo* (har-pahd-zo). *Harpazo* can mean four different things in Scripture: "to carry off by force;" "to claim for oneself eagerly;" "to snatch away speedily;" and "to rescue from the danger of destruction." The latter two

translations are the best translations in 1 Thessalonians' fourth and fifth chapters.

John 14:1-3 and **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** best prepare us for our reading tonight here in Chapter 5 (I will encourage you to go back and read these for yourselves), but it is sufficient to say tonight that the two passages parallel the same event. To put it simply, this is the “first phase” of Christ’s return and it is the event in which believing Christians and the dead in Christ meet Christ *in the air* to be with the Lord forever. The second phase is the Glorious Appearing of Christ, in which Christ defeats the antichrist and the false prophet, casts Satan into holding for 1,000 years, and physically rules *on the Earth*.

The timing of the first phase, the Rapture itself, is what we should discuss tonight. We will look at three different views of this event, but first we should note that people who are Amillennialists (those who do not believe in either the Rapture or a literal thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ) are becoming more prevalent among many people with Calvinist views. These people are not heretical, but they *are* Christians who interpret most of Revelation, especially Chapter 20, as symbolic or metaphorical. I strongly disagree with this perspective, especially given Jesus’s own instructions to John to write down His message of Revelation and to “send it to the seven churches” of that day: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea

(Revelation 1:11), in *addition* to His direct command **(Revelation 22:7)**: “Look I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” If Jesus said His Word is prophetic, I’ll go with that, and I will take it literally.

I simply cannot agree with my Ammillennial brothers and sisters: In addition to metaphoricalizing (yes, I made that word up) almost the entire Book of Revelation, it also metaphoricalizes multiple support Scriptures regarding the Rapture and the Millennial Kingdom, including Chapters 4 and 5 of 1 Thessalonians.

So, where does that leave us regarding the timing of the Rapture? We will concentrate on three views this evening: 1) The Pretribulation View which is the one I personally hold; 2) The Prewrath View, which I believe to have only gained any level of prevalence in the past twenty years or so; and 3) the Posttribulation View. There are still some folks who hold to a Midtribulation perspective, but we will skip that one for the sake of time tonight.

The Rapture will catch away Christians who are on the Earth when Christ returns. Again, there is no statement here that He will *stand* on the Earth during this phase: instead, Christians who are alive and remain will meet Him *in the air*. The “dead in Christ” and those living in Christ at the time of the Rapture will meet Jesus at *this* resurrection of sorts; Old Testament believers will apparently rise at the Glorious Appearing

following the seven-year Tribulation (see **Daniel 12:1-3**); and the unrighteous – the lost – will be resurrected to their fate at the end of the Millennial Kingdom (see **Acts 24:15; Revelation 20:12-13**, the saddest passages in all of Scripture).

Premillennial believers determine that multiple Scriptures, including **1 Thessalonians 1:10** and **5:9** and **Revelation 3:10**, specifically state that Christians are not appointed to God's wrath; therefore, we cannot be here during the Tribulation, which is also known as Daniel's 70th Week (see **Daniel 9:24-27**). The Second Coming of Jesus Christ, then, consists of one event separated by two phases which are seven years apart: the Rapture and the Glorious Appearing (**See Slide 2**). This apparently means that Christians will be raptured with Christ either shortly before or shortly after the first Gog and Magog event (see slide), in which God will miraculously save Israel from a conglomeration of multiple enemies. Following this event, Israel, unknowingly or not, will sign a covenant with the antichrist (we will discuss him when we study 1 Thessalonians 2), and the Tribulation Period will begin. (**See Slide 3**). There are many other reasons for this view that we will not have time for tonight but please refer to our Revelation series on YouTube for further explanation.

Okay, that is a *very* brief overview of the Pretribulation perspective, and now we will turn to the Prewrath perspective of the Rapture. This view

determines that Christians will go through slightly more than half to as much as approximately 5 ½ years of the Tribulation. Their view is that the wrath which occurs up until this point is the wrath of Satan, not the wrath of God. Essentially, they limit the final quarter or so of the Tribulation Period to the wrath of God, which is their understanding of “The Day of the Lord.”

In my view, there are *multiple* issues with this view: 1) **1 Thessalonians 5:1-3**, our text tonight, plainly determines that the Day of the Lord will come *unexpectedly* and when people are saying “Peace and security.” Given the events of the Tribulation Period, it is hardly likely that anyone on the Earth will be saying “peace and security” during this time. 2) The Seal Judgments, believed by both Pre-Trib and Pre-Wrath adherents to occur in the first half of the Tribulation Period, will be a *horrible* time. If the Pre-Wrath view is correct, this means that eight billion people or so will exist during this time and that one quarter of them will die due to war, famine, inflation, and hunger: that hardly sounds like “pre-wrath” to me! 3) Pre-Wrath viewers who consider the Seal Judgments (see **Revelation 6:1-17**) to be integral to Satan’s wrath (as opposed to God’s wrath) seemingly fail to note that *Jesus* is the One who opens the Seals: these events occur *only* because Christ permits them to occur (see **Revelation 6:1**).

Finally, the third view regarding the Timing of the Rapture is the Posttribulation perspective: they view the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ as only a few seconds apart and that Christians will suffer through the entire Tribulation Period. Their views are derived from an understanding based on **1 Thessalonians 4:17** in which the word “meet” is akin to going out and meeting someone, and that there is no reason to believe that the return of Christ must be immediate (thus, there may be time between the end of the Tribulation Period and the coming Kingdom). They also rely heavily on an understanding that the Trumpets mentioned in Matthew 24:31, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, and 1 Corinthians 15:52 are one and the same. Since Matthew 24:31 occurs at the end of the Tribulation Period, they surmise that the Rapture must occur then too.

However, as Mark Hitchcock ably notes, there are *significant* differences between the Trumpets of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:52 to that of Matthew 24:31 including the subject (the Church in comparison to the Jewish believers in the Great Tribulation); the circumstances (raising of believers to no resurrection mention at all); the result (uniting of the raised dead with the living to the Lord being on Earth in an open display of glory); and the signs (preceded by no signs and preceded by many signs). These are *clear* indications that these trumpets do not align. Finally, it means that Christians will live through the *entire* Tribulation – a direct contradiction of our passage tonight in

which we are promised that we are not children of wrath. It also begs the question: Why would there be a Rapture at all if we are going to live through the whole thing?!

(See Slide 4). No, I cannot get there with the Prewrath or Posttribulation perspectives, and I believe there are many passages (as we see here on the screen) which support two phases of one event: the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Finally, let's take a quick look (See Slide 5) to review what Paul is talking about here, along with what we learn from Jesus (through John) in Revelation. (Note to self: explain the dispensations).

- We are currently in the Church Age, which began in **Acts 2**.
- According to Paul in **1 Thessalonians 4 and 5**, we should expect an imminent return of Jesus Christ, and it will happen *suddenly* (the Rapture).
- Then there will be a signing of the covenant between the Israel and the antichrist, and *this* event will begin the Tribulation Period (see **Daniel 9:24-27**).
- At the end of the Tribulation Period, Jesus will return, and the Millennial Kingdom will begin.
- The enemy will be loosed, and some will follow him in battle against Jesus – they will be defeated by the very word of Jesus.

- The unrighteous will be judged and eternity will ensue. We will have to study all of this when we next study Revelation again, or feel free to go back and watch our old videos on YouTube.

Okay, that is a lot for one section of Scripture, right?! But we're not done! Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know about the Rapture *for a purpose*, and that purpose was to remind these Christians to not live as the world lives – getting drunk in the night – but instead being self-controlled and putting on the armor of faith and love and salvation! Paul said that they were to be encouraged because they were not appointed to wrath, but that they are *expected* to live sober, Christ-centered lives in which they supported each other and built each other up!

This is true for us today as well – we are to do the same things as the Thessalonians. Consider this: Paul believed the Thessalonians, and all Christians, should live with a sense of *imminence* – that Jesus could return at *any* time. It is with this in mind that he gave specific instructions regarding the way to live the Christian life!

1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

Exhortations and Blessings

¹² Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to give recognition to those who labor among you and lead you^[a] in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to regard them very highly in love because of their work. Be at

peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ And we exhort you, brothers and sisters: warn those who are idle,^[b] comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray constantly, ¹⁸ give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ Don't stifle the Spirit. ²⁰ Don't despise prophecies, ²¹ but test all things. Hold on to what is good. ²² Stay away from every kind of evil.

If everyone of us as Christians would follow what we just read, we would have no problem following Jesus's Great Command to love God and to love others (**Matthew 22:36-40**).

- Notice the first command here to the Thessalonian Church: Be *sanctified* as you wait for the return of Jesus Christ. I firmly believe that everything Paul says in this section has the imminent return of Jesus Christ in mind –we are to be holy as Christ is holy (**1 Peter 1:15-16**), and we are live our lives as if we are awaiting His Return! Now, we see here just *how* to do that!
 - Honor those who are spiritually leading you. Follow godly leaders and honor them because of the difficult work they do.
 - Be at peace among yourselves – get along together and show love to one another. As Paul told the Philippian Church, “If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation

of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose” **(Philippians 2:1-2).**

- Warn those who are idle – love one another enough to say, “Hey, brother or sister, we *need* you to serve *with* us.”
- Comfort the discouraged – be encouragers, people!
- Help the weak – realize that we all need help at times. For those who are weaker in the Lord, help them grow!
- Be patient with everyone. What?! In the Church?! Are you kidding me, Paul?! Okay, so this one is more difficult than some of the others, at least for some of us. We must be patient with others, according to what the Spirit inspired here.
- Don’t repay evil with evil but *pursue* good things for the other. We should put away our preferences for the good of the other. Whew. Jesus did not say this is an easy road!
- Rejoice always – always remember, in joy, *why* we are doing what we are doing.
- Pray constantly – there is literally no way to do all the other things if we are not doing this, for ourselves, for our families, and for each other. Pray your breath prayers (short, constant prayers to remind us to submit to the Holy Spirit). Mine is: “Lord, help me to see.”

- Do God's will – *give thanks always!*
- And then the big one: do not stifle – or do not quench – the Holy Spirit. Wait, we can stifle God the Spirit? How can we do *that*? Well, I am glad you asked! Here are seven ways in which the Holy Spirit can be stifled (and there may be more):
 - 1) Be led by the wrong leaders – if the Church chooses leaders who are not filled with the Holy Spirit, then you can *expect* to quench the Spirit of God. Jeremiah and Ezekiel both dealt with false prophets and God said He would personally deal with those who dishearten His People and lead them astray
(**Jeremiah 28:1-17** and **Ezekiel 13:17-23**).
 - 2) Ignore the Holy Spirit's voice when we *know* it is His voice.
 - 3) Demand our own preferences instead of looking out for the overall good of the Kingdom and the Church.
 - 4) Fail to seek and to engage the Spirit. There are times in which we fail to even *remember* the Spirit, leading Francis Chan to write the book, *Forgotten God*, and Tyler Staton to write the book, *The Familiar Stranger*. We do seem to forget that the Spirit exists at times. We *say* we are seeking Jesus, *yet* we are not even talking to the Spirit that He and the Father sent

to us. Jesus said, “Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don’t go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send him to you” (**John 16:7**).

- 5) Fail to use the gifts we are given for the good of the Church and God’s Kingdom and we fail to walk in the Spirit’s fruit. We must seek the gifts that the Holy Spirit distributes to all Christians and use them well (**1 Corinthians 12-14**). We must demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**). Want to know who to choose to follow? Look to those who demonstrate both the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit!
- 6) Rely on other sources more than we rely on the Holy Spirit, as Pastor Sam Storms so ably notes, especially anything dealing with life or ministry. So, we should rely on the Holy Spirit for *everything*!
- 7) Sin (**Galatians 5:16-22**). We must crucify the flesh and follow the Holy Spirit! Our hope must be in the Spirit far more than it is in the flesh. We can *trust* the Holy Spirit and the *power* that *He* gives us: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believer so that you may overflow with hope

by the power of the Holy Spirit” (**Romans 15:13**).

Not my power but *His* power.

- Okay, in addition to not stifling the Spirit, what else did Paul say?
 - Pay attention to prophecy but test it and hold to that which is good. Not every prophet is a prophet of God. Make sure you are listening to those who are Spirit-filled and -led and who are following God closely.
 - Stay away from *every* kind of evil. Not a few kinds. All of it. Don’t touch it, don’t think it, don’t have anything to do with it.

These are the things that if we do them, we can walk in the peace of Christ, as we will see in our remaining verses.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

²³ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will do it. ²⁵ Brothers and sisters, pray for us also. ²⁶ Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. ²⁷ I charge you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brothers and sisters. ²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

It is so very reassuring to remember that it is not our efforts that allows us to be successful in the Christian Walk. As God says, *He* will do it: “I – I am the LORD. Besides me there is no Savior. I alone declared, saved, and proclaimed – and not some foreign god among you. So you are my witnesses – this is the LORD’s declaration – and I am God” **Isaiah 43:11-12**).

At the end of this first Letter to the Thessalonians, the Spirit, through Paul, reminds the Church to live sanctified lives as they wait on the Lord to return. This sense of imminence is ever present throughout this initial Letter, just as it was when Paul wrote the Corinthian Church: “He has also put his seal on us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment” (**2 Corinthians 1:22**).

Stand firm in the Spirit and in the faith, my friends, live lives worthy of Christ, and wait on Him to return!

Pray

1 & 2 Thessalonians Sources (1 Thessalonians 5)

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