

As Citizens Awaiting Their King...

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Introduction

If you are like most people, you have probably hosted an event at your home that required you to prepare beforehand. Certain rooms needed to be cleaned. Problem areas addressed. Junk needed to be stored away. Doors needed to be locked. You get the picture...

We all know what it is like to prepare for company. To get our homes ready for the arrival of a guest. In similar manner, we are called to be ready for Jesus' arrival. When He returns to call us home to Himself. But one of the things about Jesus' arrival is that we do not set the date. Unlike the events that we host at our homes, we don't get to send an invitation for Jesus' arrival.

So, that means we cannot wait until the last minutes to "clean up our rooms, address our problem areas, rid ourselves of the junk, and lock away the areas that we are ashamed of." We have to be ready for His return. So, I ask, are you ready? Are you prepared for the return of Jesus?

In this morning's passage, the apostle Paul deals with this very question...

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Exposition

I. The Details of Jesus' Return are Unknown (Vss. 1-3)

Let's look at verse 1 again. Paul writes, "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you." What is Paul talking about when he says, "times and seasons?" Well, he goes on to explain in verse 2. He writes, "For you yourselves are fully aware that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." The language of the "Day of the Lord" is deeply rooted in the Old Testament (Isa. 2:1-4:6, Jer. 46:10, Ezek. 30:2-3, Obad. 15, Joel 1:15, 2:1, 11, 31-32, Amos 5:18-20, Zeph. 1:14-18, Zech. 14). In the Old Testament, the Day of the Lord referred to the Day of Reckoning. It was the Day when the Lord would settle all accounts. And, even though there was a glorious and great hope for full redemption on that Day, many of the Old Testament's passages spoke somberly about the Day. In fact, the Day of the Lord was often used to motivate the people of God to repent from their idolatry. For, if they persisted in their sin, unbelief, and unrepentance, then they would not escape God's just judgment. In the New Testament, the "Day of the Lord" has similar connotations, yet, the Christians understood that the Lord that was coming was none other than Jesus Christ himself (1 Cor. 1:8, 2 Cor. 1:14, Phil. 1:6, 10, 2:16, Rom. 2:5, 13:12, Eph. 4:30, 2 Tim. 1:12, 18).

For Paul, then, the church in Thessalonica was already aware of this coming day of the Lord and given the fact that there was such an ominous tone to the day, Paul did not want the church to misunderstand the significance of that day for them as believers. While, according to verse 3, some would be unprepared for that day, finding hope and refuge in the false "peace and security" of the world, the believer did not have anything to fear in the return of Christ, because, as we will see later, believers are not "destined to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Certainty of Jesus' Return is Known by Believers (Vss. 4-8)

So then, Paul reminds the church in Thessalonica, in verse 4, “You are not in darkness,” in other words, you do not lack understanding about the coming Day of the Lord. It will not surprise you as it will surprise those who find security in things others than the Lord. Paul goes on in verse 5 to tell the church that they are “children of the light, children of the day.” Paul’s point is that these believers are neither associated with darkness or rebellion in their understanding or their actions. They belong to God, who is the “Father of Light.” And because they are “children of the light,” they should live accordingly, as Paul notes in verse 6 – “So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.” They are not to be ignorant nor controlled by anything other than the Spirit of God. They are to live “steady and ready lives” as one commentator put it.

When we read the terms “awake” and “sober,” we must be aware that Paul is using them in a spiritual sense. He is not primarily concerned with people being physically awake or physically sober in this passage, but rather, he is concerned with a sobriety of the mind, a wakefulness of the spirit, which discerns the “signs of the times,” that sees the day of the Lord drawing near, and that eagerly longs for the day of Christ’s appearing. Those who belong to the day, that is, those who are children of the light, live in the light, and do not fulfill the deeds of the flesh, that is, the deeds of night, the deeds of darkness.

This is the point in verses 7 and 8, “because we belong to the Day, we live differently!” For, we have put on the faith, love, and hope in Christ! And because we have put on faith, love, and hope in Christ, we do not have to fear the Day of the Lord! Look at verse 9-10, “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with Him!

As believers, we have hope both in life and in death. Therefore, while we are alive, we live with a readiness for the Day of the Lord. We long for His appearing. We pray for the day of His return, saying, “Even so, come Lord Jesus!” We do not set our hopes and security on the things of this world. We do not look to our health, wealth, prosperity, or politics for hope, happiness, and satisfaction in this world. We live with our eyes open to the realities of heaven, knowing that one day, Christ will return, vindicating His people, and judging those who refused to acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior in this life. We who have hoped in Christ do not fear the day of His return! We do not fear the Day because we know He loves us and gave Himself for us. We, like a bride who is waiting for the appearing of her groom, do not fret over whether he will arrive in anger toward us. We know He loves us. We cannot wait to see our beloved!

That is how you feel about the return of Jesus, right?

Conclusion

You are encouraged that He is returning, right? You are longing for the day when He opens the heavens and we meet Him in the air? You do not believe that you will be deprived of something in this life if He returns before you get to complete some things on your bucket list, do you? His return won’t be an interruption in your plans, will it? You are ready, right?

The apostle Paul wrote to ready his churches for the return of Jesus. He wrote to remind them that this world was not their home. He wrote to make sure that they did not get too comfortable in waiting room. Whatever permanence that we feel in this life must be evaluated in light of eternity. Whatever things that you are hoping in, focusing on, and finding your identity in must be submitted to the Lordship of Jesus! As the old saying goes, “Only one life t’will soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last!”

Does your life reflect this heavenly perspective? Can you, with Paul’s audience, say, “I’m ready?” Do you believe that God has “not destined you for wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ?”

If you can answer, “yes,” to these questions, then there are two things that you must do today:

- 1) Resolve to be Ready for the Lord’s Return
- 2) Encourage Fellow Believers with this Truth

But you say, “Well, I’m not sure if I’m a believer. I’m not sure if I am ready for Jesus to return.” What do I do? You admit that you are a sinner in need of God’s mercy. You believe that God sent Jesus to die in your place under God’s wrath so that you might be free from it. And you confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior. And you can do that right now as we close in prayer...