

# Only Two Kinds of People

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11  
**Preached on:** Sunday, April 10, 2016

Our hearts have been more than adequately prepared to worship the Lord through his word this morning so if you will take your Bibles and turn to 1 Thessalonians 5, we will continue to examine this amazing epistle that has such practical implications to our lives. We will be looking at verses 4 through 11 of 1 Thessalonians 5, and here Paul reassures the troubled new believers in Thessalonica that they would not experience God's wrath, that their fears that somehow they were already in the day of the Lord were unfounded and therefore they could rejoice. And as we are going to see, his explanation should really be a profound encouragement to each of us as well as exhortation to each of us. Let me read the text beginning in verse 4,

4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Here we are reminded that there are only two kinds of people in the world: the saved and the damned. Those who belong to God through faith in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who don't. The redeemed and the unredeemed. The children of God and the children of Satan, as we read in Scripture. Those who love the true Triune God of the Bible and those who don't. Those who love his word and those who don't. Those who live for his glory, those who don't. Those who are prepared for the day of the Lord and will be delivered from it, and those who are unprepared and will not be delivered. Basically there are true Christians and non-Christians. True Christians as described here are those who are not in darkness; they are sons of light; they are described as sons of day and do not belong to the night or to the darkness; those who are destined for salvation; those who are therefore expected to be "alert and sober," or it could be translated self-controlled. And non-Christians are described very differently. They are described as those who are in darkness; those who belong to the night. They are depicted as asleep and drunk. We know biblically that they are blinded by Satan. They are unable and unwilling to comprehend spiritual truth and they are unprepared for God's judgment.

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May I also remind you that in the Gospels we see that people are divided into two categories as well at the time of the judgment: there are the sheep and the goats, right? There are the tares and the wheat. So, folks, the lines are clearly defined biblically. There is no middle ground. It's like being pregnant, if you will, you either are or you're not. You're either a believer or you're not. A man either knows and loves Christ or he doesn't. He's either in light or he's in darkness. And as we examine these distinctions, we will quickly discover that the marks of a true Christian in our culture have been so blurred by compromise and sin and bad doctrine that the term Christian itself is amorphous, it's nebulous, so much so that it bears little resemblance to the true definition of a Christian as defined in Scripture and unfortunately today, every profession of faith is considered certain proof of genuine saving faith and then if a person adds to that some kind of religious affiliation or religious activity or spiritual service, then that is considered to be even further validation that a person has been born again. But biblically, these things neither prove nor disprove genuine saving faith and it grieves me as a pastor to see so many people who profess Christ as Savior and some even in our church, and yet when you look at their character and their conduct, even though they are good people, nice people and the kind who say the Christian things and grunt at the appropriate times and nod their heads at the appropriate times, even all those things are there, when you look at their private life and even how they conduct the rest of their life, you see very quickly that they really have no love for Christ. It's all a sham. Most people live solely for themselves, not for Christ.

You may want to ask yourself: do I really have a true love for God or am I basically so in love for myself that I am the center of gravity around which everything in my life orbits? Am I ruled by my lusts or am I ruled by the word of God? Do I have a passion to somehow satisfy all of my pleasures in life or do I have a real passion for the glory of God? Do I have an appetite for his word? Do I find real nourishment for my soul in it or is that really something that I just deal with on Sundays? Do I have a desire to really proclaim and defend the Gospel? Do I have a burden for the lost? Do I have a zeal for evangelism? Do I have a longing to see Christ face-to-face soon? I mean, folks, this is the stuff of genuine saving faith. Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits," right? He went on to say, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Said differently, "If you claim you're an apple tree, let's see the apples," right? And as we look at the text today, Paul is going to give us some distinctions to help us see what those apples might look like.

Now, let me give you a little bit of context here so that you're with me and with, certainly, the Apostle Paul. Because some of the saints in Thessalonica were being persecuted, they

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felt as though they were living during the day of the Lord, that season of unprecedented judgment that is going to come upon the world, the prekingdom judgments just before Christ returns, and he wants to reassure them that that is not the case. You may recall last week we looked at the first three verses here of chapter 5 where he clarifies the nature of the coming day of the Lord, something radically different than they were experiencing, that season of just unimaginable judgment upon Satan's world system that rejects God. And it's interesting that the day of the Lord is going to divide humanity into these two different camps just mentioned: those destined for salvation and those destined for wrath, and for the believer, these truths should really serve as a basis for our faithfulness and perseverance in serving Christ. So to bring comfort to the Thessalonians, he offers a series of distinctions now between believers and unbelievers and especially as they relate to how each group thinks and acts in light of the inevitable judgment that is going to come upon the world.

Now, important background here. The imagery of darkness was often used in the Old Testament to describe unbelievers. Speaking of rebellious Israel in Psalm 107, beginning in verse 10, we read this, "There were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death, Prisoners in misery and chains, Because they had rebelled against the words of God And spurned the counsel of the Most High. Therefore He humbled their heart with labor; They stumbled and there was none to help." So he's thinking back upon the Egyptian captivity. But then in verses 13 and following he went on to describe that magnificent work of regeneration whereby the Spirit of God caused them to see their sin and bring them to a place of repentance, delivering them from darkness into light. He goes on to say in verse 13, "Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death And broke their bands apart. Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! For He has shattered gates of bronze And cut bars of iron asunder."

It's interesting that also the prophet Isaiah described the supernatural transformation from spiritual darkness to light in chapter 9, beginning in verse 2. He said, "The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them." Then he went on to reveal who this light would be, none other than the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 6 he says, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." Then as we go to the Gospels, we see that Matthew, for example in chapter 4, beginning in verse 12 really records the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophesy. There we read this, "Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of

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Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet," and here's the prophecy, "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned."

Now, what's really fascinating is John speaks very vividly of this light, the light of Christ, in his Gospel. May I remind you of one extraordinary scenario that occurred, we read about it in John 8 where the light of Christ blazed forth in a fascinating way during the eighth day Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles was a time where they commemorated God's provision and protection over his covenant people when he led them out of Egypt and protected them during their wanderings in the wilderness, and this was also a feast that pointed to the future blessings of the millennial kingdom when the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, will come and dwell amongst the people. Now, during that festival, they had four massive candelabras, golden lamps, that were erected in the outer court of the temple and the people would come in an exuberant procession carrying torches that were burning, singing and dancing and celebrating this time with the accompaniment of the Levitical orchestra and all of the music. So it was a grand and glorious spectacle. You just have to somehow imagine it in your mind and this happened at night and they say that the glow of these massive lamps was so powerful that it illuminated all of Jerusalem, and during this celebration the Israelites would sing Psalm 27:1, "The LORD is my light and my salvation." And they would celebrate the word of God that was a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path, a light that would guide them, that would guide all who fear him. And they would sing Psalm 44 that extols the power of Yahweh's "right hand and his arm and the light of his presence." Then suddenly in the context of this pageantry, the very source of light and life makes a stunning declaration. They didn't know he was there probably, there would have been so many people. But suddenly at just the right time and don't you know the Lord could do this, at just the right time, Jesus says this as recorded in John 8:12, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the Light of life." Don't you know a holy hush came over that gathering. You could have probably heard a pin drop. There the prophecy, again, was fulfilled. Suddenly the people who sat in darkness saw a great light.

Friends, what did Paul say to King Agrippa to help him understand why Jesus had sent Paul to the Gentiles with the Gospel? He said it was for this reason in Acts 26:18, "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." Oh, what a magnificent, soul-thrilling truth this is, to know that because of grace we have been given the gift of faith in the Lord Jesus

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Christ who has, as we read earlier, rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

Now, with this background, we come to the text here in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11 and I've divided it into three categories to hopefully help you not only grasp what he's saying but able to apply it to your life. He is telling them that believers will not experience the wrath of God during the day of the Lord for three reasons: 1. because of the uniqueness of their character; secondly, because of the uniqueness of their conduct; and then, thirdly, because of the uniqueness of their destiny. And I pray that you will examine your life this morning to determine which group you are in, those of light or those of darkness.

So let's look at what he has to say with respect to the uniqueness of the believer's character. He begins this in verse 4, he says, "But you, brethren, are not in darkness," and he's speaking here to the fact that they are now a new creature in Christ. They have a radically different nature. Their character, their disposition is radically different than that of an unbeliever. For this reason, they are no longer incarcerated in that domain of darkness and they will not, as Jesus says in Matthew 8:12, "be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The Apostle Paul described this as well in Ephesians 5, beginning in verse 8. Speaking of those of us who were once lost but have now come to faith in Christ, he says, "you were formerly darkness." Isn't that graphic? "You were formerly darkness but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)." And earlier in chapter 2, verses 1 through 3, Paul went into great detail to describe the spiritual darkness that characterizes an unbeliever prior to salvation, I should say a believer prior to salvation characterizing and unbeliever. I hope you understand. He says, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins." I like to say you were a spiritual cadaver, utterly lifeless. That's what it means. "You were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

Now, again, verse 4 of what Paul is saying here in 1 Thessalonians 5, "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day," referring to the day of the Lord that he has been describing in previous verses, "that the day would overtake you like a thief." It's interesting that the day of the Lord is also described as a day of darkness, not of light in Joel 2. He's saying, "As day people rather than night people, you are not going to be subject to this. The people who prefer darkness rather than light will, but you are day people. You now abide in Christ. You've been forever separated from divine wrath." He

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goes on to say in verse 5, "for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness." So he's saying, in essence, you have nothing to fear. You are a believer. You are now united to Christ so you need not fear missing the rapture of the church that he talks about and being left behind to experience the wrath of God that he will pour out upon all who oppose him.

It's also important for you to know by way of background that the emblem of light in Scripture is used to describe things like life, truth, holiness, happiness, the glory of heaven, the presence of God, and so on, while the figure of darkness is used to describe just the opposite. It's used to describe ignorance, error, guilt, depravity, desperation, misery, death and the horror of hell which Jesus described as a place of outer darkness. A terrifying thought. And spiritually, we live in a very dark world. It's because God in his sovereignty is allowing Satan, the prince of darkness, to be the temporary ruler of this world and his kingdom is called the domain of darkness. Those who reject Christ as Satan's unwitting followers; they are in bondage to him; they grope in the darkness of their ignorance and misery and depravity. Solomon says in Proverbs 2:13 that they are "those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness."

Now, no person in his right mind, no rational person, would want to live in physical darkness and I'm told by physicians that if you're in darkness long enough, you will go blind. And yet those who reject the light of Christ, actually prefer darkness, spiritually speaking. Jesus said this was the judgment that the light has come into the world and men love the darkness rather than the light for their deeds were evil. And as we look at unbelievers, they fumble their way through life falling over countless obstacles until they eventually fall headlong into the darkness of their grave and eventually if they're without Christ, they fall into the outer darkness of hell. Proverbs 4:19 describes this saying, "The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know over what they stumble." And Jesus says in John 12:35, "he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes." And, again, most people, I should say all people who do not know Christ essentially live for themselves. They grow up, they go to school, they do their vacations, they finally get trained, they have some type of career, they work, they have some vacation time and in the meantime they, in the United States, they finally get to a place where they retire, they get sick and they die and they spend eternity in hell. Terrifying, isn't it? I mean, you don't even want to think about this. And do you know why the unsaved, the lost, don't think about it? It's because Satan has blinded their minds.

Well, Paul makes it abundantly clear that true believers, verse 5, "are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness." So he's saying, in essence, that we have a unique character; we've been transformed and we are empowered by the Holy Spirit of God that dwells within us. So he's saying to them, "You will not experience therefore the

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wrath of God during the day of the Lord because of these things, because of the uniqueness of your character." But secondly, it's because of the uniqueness of a believer's conduct. When the nature has been transformed, the conduct will follow. If you see conduct that is not consistent with Christ-likeness, you know that the nature hasn't been changed, okay? Very simple. So true saving faith is validated by a man's private and public demeanor; by how he acts. So Paul encourages them to this end.

Notice in verse 6, "so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation." Now, the imagery here of sleep is the perfect picture of those who live in spiritual lethargy, spiritual darkness. They are utterly indifferent to the things of God. Like being in a deep sleep physically, when you're in a deep sleep spiritually you know nothing of what's going on around you and you don't care. Just look at those in our country who stand on the very brink of hell but cannot see the flames. They have no fear of God before their eyes. They do not tremble at the wrath of God that looms over their unholy head, the wrath of God that will be their eternal fate. Why? Because they are asleep spiritually.

Just look at how this affects our nation and our culture. Our country right now is disintegrating before our very eyes. We are in an economic freefall with a 19 trillion dollar debt. Half the people of the United States depend upon government assistance to survive. Today we have summer camps for children whose parents want to help them change their gender. Suddenly the Supreme Court has decided that same-sex marriage is the law of the land. We are now dealing with states passing laws to allow transgendered people to use the restroom that best reflects their sexual identity. The Justice Department's national criminal justice reference service says that almost half – catch this – almost half of all babies murdered in abortion clinics are killed within the first 24 hours after birth; it's called neonaticide. The CDC says that "approximately 27,000 unintentional drug overdose deaths occur in the United States over the course of one year." That's one death every 19 minutes. Sexual promiscuity in our country is so rampant that 1 in 3 Americans has a sexually transmitted disease. Today, 41% of US births are illegitimate and it's 73% in the African American community. Do you realize that we now have more soldiers dying of suicide than from combat? The National Institute of Mental Health reports that almost 14.8 million American adults have a major depressive disorder, 21 million have a mood disorder, 5.7 million suffer from bipolar disorder, 2.4 million have schizophrenia, 40 million have an anxiety disorder, 6 million have a panic disorder, 7.7 million are dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder, 6.8 million have generalized anxiety disorder, 1.5 million have a social phobia and another 19 million have some type of specific phobia and this doesn't include the millions of kids with attention deficit

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hyperactivity disorder or autism spectrum disorder which, according to the CDC, now afflicts as many as 1 in 50 American kids. And what does our neo-Marxist President and his administration and so many other people claim to be the greatest threat facing our nation today? Global warming. You say, "This is insanity!" No, folks, this is depravity. This is an example of people that are asleep. These people need our love and our prayers because they need the Lord and were it not for God's saving grace, we would be right there with them living in a parallel universe. This is an illustration of those who are spiritually asleep. They are unconscious and indifferent to the Gospel. They have no fear of God in their heart and no desire to know him.

Former Marxist, Vladimir Lenin, who once served as the head of communist Russia said this in 1913, quote, "Every religious idea, every idea of God, even flirting with the idea of God is unutterable vileness of the most dangerous kind, contagion of the most abominable kind. Millions of sins, filthy deeds, acts of violence and physical contagions are far less dangerous than the subtle spiritual idea of God." Satanic, yet Lenin's embalmed body has been on public display in a mausoleum in Red Square in the center of Moscow since shortly after his death in 1924. I've been there, some of you have, to see it.

Folks, how different for those who have had their eyes opened by God's grace who understand the light of the Gospel. Do you remember that time when by God's grace he moved upon your heart and you were suddenly awakened from the slumber of your spiritual sleep? When you trembled at the holiness of God and you saw your sin for what it was? I remember that very clearly as a little boy, nine years old. I can remember that the very marrow of my bones, so to speak, melted within me causing me to cry out for mercy and he gave that mercy to me as he has to you. Oh, what a blessed thing the power of regenerating grace, the power of redeeming grace, the power of sanctifying grace and that's what Paul is focusing on here, that sanctifying grace.

Notice verse 6, "so then," in other words, in light of all this, "let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober." Translated differently, let us be vigilant and self-controlled in light of the coming day of the Lord. Don't be lax, don't be unprepared, be morally alert, be committed to holy living in view of the day of the Lord. Live a life that honors him. I love that text in Titus 2:11 and following, it says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

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Back to verse 6, "so then," in light of all this, "let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night." So don't be like the pagans. You Christians, we Christians, we don't live in darkness. They do and they love it. To put it in the imagery here of the drunkard, don't be like a slobbering drunk like you see unfortunately down in Nashville. They vomit on their clothes. They drool in their beards. They stumble along. They laugh indiscriminately at something that nobody can see. They are utterly oblivious to what's really going on around them and spiritually speaking, the lost are exactly that way. They are ignorant and indifferent concerning the attentions of God's wrath. Beloved, there is no place for this type of unawareness, this kind of spiritual intoxication among Christians. We must be alert. We must be sober.

No doubt Paul was drawing this analogy from Jesus' parable in John 12 or I should say, Luke 12, where he contrasted the vigilant and faithful slaves with those who were not. Here's what he said in verse 35, "Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into." So he goes on to say this, "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect." Then in verse 43 he goes on to say, "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions." Verse 45, "But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers."

What an admonition. You see, we as believers need to be vigilant about the reality of the Lord's return, about judgment. We need to live in light of his return. Don't you want him to come and find you faithful rather than somehow caught up in your own little world? And it's so easy for us to get preoccupied with our lives in such a way that we don't take time to really weed the garden of our souls and that's Paul's point here. You see, sober Christians are serious Christians. They are serious about their walk with Christ. They're serious about the attitudes of their heart. They are serious about their private prayer life and their personal pursuit of holiness. They are serious about understanding and applying the word of God. They are serious about their shepherding their wives and their children

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if they're a male. They're serious about lovingly submitting to their husband. They're serious about raising their children in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. And if I can put it this way: they are constantly longing for Christ, they are constantly looking for Christ and they are constantly living for Christ. Now, folks, this doesn't just happen. You must cry out to the Spirit of God to help you see these great truths and apply them to your life. You must, as Paul says, discipline yourself for the sake of godliness. Commit yourself to learning and applying the word of God and be committed to discipleship and so forth.

Folks, please hear me: if you are not habitually devoted to prayer and to Bible study and to reading great theology and spending time around people that know and love Christ and know and love his word, it's just a matter of time that you're going to drift into a state of being lax, indifferent, caught up in the world, unprepared from what's really happening all around you, and you will become like so many Christians: weak, ineffective and living under a cloud of divine chastening. Oh, dear Christian, isn't it amazing we are sons of light, sons of the day, so live in light of that.

And Paul goes on then to address this matter of the uniqueness of the believer's conduct and he uses this triad of Christian virtues that he's used before. Notice verse 8, "But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation." You will recall back in chapter 1, verse 3, Paul demonstrated how the virtues of faith, hope and love really prove true conversion. Moreover, they help us guard against temptation and sin. And you will recall that those virtues were so obvious in the Thessalonian believers that everybody could see it. He talked about their work of faith which speaks of their holy conduct that faith produces and therefore causing them to trust in God's sovereignty and in his faithfulness and in his goodness come what may. He spoke of their labor of love, referring to their strenuous effort to love God and to love others. And their steadfastness of hope which refers to their persevering anticipation of seeing the glory of Christ and receiving their eternal inheritance. And you want to ask yourself: are these virtues obvious in my life? Can other people look at me and say, "Yes, indeed, I see in this man or in this woman a growing likeness to Christ that faith produces. I see in this person an absolute dependence and contentment with God's sovereign plan in their life. I see in this person one who wants to use their gifts for the glory of God. I see in this person one who is longing to see Christ, who loves God's people," and so forth.

I want you to notice how Paul uses this imagery of spiritual armor to help us understand the importance of these virtues. He says, first of all, "let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love." Now, we know that the breastplate of a soldier protected the vital organs of the soldier and when we look at faith which is that confidence in God's

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sovereign plan and purpose in our life and love which is that supreme devotion to God and to others, those are the things that make up the breastplate as Paul is telling us here. And if we're not wearing that, if we're not trusting in God, if we're not loving him and loving others, we're vulnerable. We're vulnerable to attack and you say, "How so?" Well, let me tell you because I deal with this every single week with some of you and with others. People without faith trust in themselves and they worry. They are ruled by their fears. They are committed to self-protection. They take matters into their own hands. They basically become what we all control freaks. They create alternate realities where they can manipulate their world, where they can command other people to orbit around them. They complain, they criticize, they doubt the goodness of God and they end up making themselves and everyone around them miserable. It's what happens when you don't have faith and love. Relationships with these kind of people don't work. They certainly don't last. They become useless in Christian service. When you try to carry on a spiritual theological conversation with them, you'll find very quickly that they don't really have much to say and unless you initiate it, they never bring anything like that up. They don't talk about what God is doing in their life. They're not celebrating Christ. They're not excited about some passage of Scripture that the Spirit of God has revealed to them that is just earth shattering. Instead, their conversation is like their spiritual life: it's as shallow as dew on a pumpkin and their theology is as twisted as a barrel of snakes. They are probably ten times more dangerous. It's the opposite of being sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love. These people are ruled by selfishness and self-will and they become master manipulators and eventually they drive everyone out of their lives and they become miserable.

He also says, "and as a helmet, the hope of salvation." The helmet, that which protects the mind. This doesn't just refer to the idea of understanding soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, as important as that is, but the context here is especially that of understanding and celebrating the hope of salvation, in other words, understanding eternal glory, having a longing for that. And how sad to talk to Christians that know nothing about eschatology, that know hardly anything about what God is up to, what is going to happen. They know very little about heaven. They are more concerned about how many likes they get on Facebook or what the latest score is for their team. Isn't it easy for us to get caught up into this? Don't be that way, he's saying. 1 John 3, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." John MacArthur said it so well, "When faith is weak, love grows cold. When love grows cold, hope is lost."

Well, finally as we close this morning, he speaks of the uniqueness of the believer's destiny which also distinguishes believers from non-believers. Notice verse 9, "For God

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has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us," isn't that precious? He dies as our substitute, "so that whether we are awake or asleep," in other words, whether we're alive or whether we're dead, "we will live together with Him." My, what a promise. It makes me want to shout, "Hallelujah!" right? There you go. You know, what an astounding truth. Just let that sink in for a moment. I am so thankful, what Paul said in Ephesians 1:4 that, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him." Absolutely staggering. Or think what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:9, "He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works," no, no, no, no, "but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." In the original language, literally before time began. Staggering.

Verse 11 then, back to what Paul says, "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another." Encourage one another means to reassure one another, comfort one another. It even has the idea of edifying one another. It's as if he's saying, "Remind your brothers and sisters in Christ that we are all day people, we're not of the night, so don't be afraid of the day of the Lord. We're not destined for wrath." Then also build them up which literally means help your brother or your sister in Christ grow and progress in their faith. Folks, may I remind you that we all have a responsibility to help each other grow in Christ. That's not just my job or the elders' job or the Sunday school teachers or the Awana, it's all of our responsibility. This is fundamental to body life in the church. The goal of each member of the Christian community is to build up other members through the use of our spiritual gifts that the Spirit of God has given to us.

And I love what he says here, "just as you also are doing." And I want to close with that thought. You are doing that and I am so thankful. I mean, this is happening here. I am so thankful that thanks to Pastor Joe's ministry and along with so many others involved in soul care discipleship and counseling, we're seeing this encouraging one another, this building up of one another. We just want to see more and more of that. We're seeing God bless that.

So, dear Christian, I challenge you because you are sons and daughters of light, be alert and be sober. Don't allow yourself to be intoxicated by the mind numbing opiates of this world. If I can make it real practical, when he says be sober, it means self-control. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit, right? Alright, how do we manifest the fruits of the Spirit? By walking by the Spirit. It says if you walk by the Spirit you won't carry out the deeds of the flesh, right? So how do you walk by the Spirit? You immerse yourself in the word of God; you live consistently with the truths that the Spirit of God gives us through his word; and then automatically you're going to be alert and you're going to be sober. And if I can make it real practical, limit the amount of time you spend looking at

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screens, alright? That stuff is killing brain cells. It's got to be. And it is certainly leading you in a direction that is not going to honor Christ and it's going to bring misery to your life. Let me tell you, it will bring misery to your life because I deal with some of your misery every single day of my life as a pastor. If I could do one thing besides preaching the Gospel, I would absolutely destroy every television and every computer screen and all these little screens. I know they are wonderful tools in so many ways but unfortunately the enemy uses that to entice our flesh and all of a sudden we become these zombies that are anything but alert and sober. But instead, folks, start nourishing your soul. Feed your soul, not your flesh and watch what God will do.

To those of you who walk in darkness, oh, how I plead with you as a minister of the Gospel, place your faith in Christ before it's too late or you will perish in your sin and the eternal darkness of an eternal hell will be your eternal abode so I pray for you to that end.

Let's pray together.

*Father, thank you for these eternal truths. Use them to somehow speak to each heart, especially those who know nothing of Christ. And Lord, I already know because of the first service that there is one who is under deep conviction and I pray that by your grace you will save him today and likewise anyone within the sound of my voice here. O Lord, be merciful and save them even as you have saved us. We give you praise and we long to see you face-to-face and bask eternally in the light of your glory and grace. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.*

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources websites at [otcr.org](http://otcr.org).