



# A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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# A Thief in the Night

**SERMON REFERENCE:** 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

**LWF SERMON NUMBER:** #2175

If we believe in our hearts that Jesus is coming again, we must be ready for His return; 1 Thessalonians 5:2 says He will come “like a thief in the night.” This chapter, 1 Thessalonians 5, offers four truths about Jesus’ glorious return.

## **First, it will be a surprising day.**

We are certain that He is coming, but we do not know when. As we wait for Him, we should be sharing our faith with others, so that they are also ready for the Second Coming.

Adrian Rogers says, “Jesus Christ is coming; He came on time, He was born on time, He died on time, and He rose on time. He’s coming again in His own time; He will never be late.”

## **Second, we can escape sudden destruction.**

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:4). The day of Christ’s return will be a solemn, sudden, and sure day—the calm before the storm of judgment to come. On that day, He will rapture His Church from the world, and believers will escape the Great Tribulation prophesied in Revelation.

## **Third, we must endure this surrounding darkness.**

We live in a world plagued by moral, spiritual, and political darkness. As children of God, we must be aware and wise up, be awake and get up, and be alert and dress up—putting on the armor of God. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:8, we need to get our hearts right and keep our heads right: “But let us who are of the day be sober.”

## **Finally, we will experience a sure deliverance:**

“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11).

This passage explains that we can expect to be delivered from His wrath. This assurance is meant to edify us in these Last Days. As God rescued Noah and his family before flooding the Earth in Genesis 6, so will He rapture His Church before the Great Tribulation.

## **Life Application**

As we wait with expectation for Jesus’ return, we should be in the habit of sharing the Gospel. Adrian Rogers says, “Get your head out of the clouds of prophecy and get your feet on the pavement of soul-winning.”



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## 1) INTRODUCTION

- a) The purpose of this message is get us ready for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b) In this age, we are living between two mountain peaks: the blood-drenched slopes of Mount Calvary and the sunlit peaks of glory of Mount Zion.
  - i) Between the crucifixion and the coronation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## 2) EXPECT A SURPRISING DAY (1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-2)

- a) A thief in the night comes surprisingly, when we are not expecting it.
  - i) And so it is with the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- b) Paul is not setting a date for the Second Coming.
  - i) Paul referred to the certainty and the uncertainty.
    - (1) The certainty: He is coming.
    - (2) The uncertainty: we do not know when.
- c) Acts 1:6-8
  - i) The disciples, sitting with Jesus before His ascension, wanted to know about prophecy.
  - ii) Anyone who sets a date for His return is disobeying the Lord.
    - (1) It is not for us to know.
  - iii) We need to get our heads out of the clouds of prophecy and get our feet on the pavement of soul-winning.
  - iv) We need to share the Gospel and get people ready for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus.
- d) We are 2,000 years nearer than we have ever been before.
- e) Jesus came on time, He was born on time, He died on time, He rose on time and He is coming again in His own time.
  - i) He may seem slow, but He will never be late.
  - ii) 2 Peter 3:8-10
    - (1) In God's heart and mind, it has been no longer than two days.
    - (2) The Day of the Lord will be a very troubling time.
      - (a) The church will be taken out at the rapture.
      - (b) God will pour out His wrath upon this world.
    - (3) The raging waters of God's wrath are pounding against the dam of His mercy.

## 3) ESCAPE A SUDDEN DESTRUCTION (1 THESSALONIANS 5:3-4)

- a) Those who know the Lord will escape the sudden destruction.
  - i) The rapture of the church will take us out before this day comes.
- b) "The Day of the Lord" refers to the Great Tribulation.
- c) Luke 23:28



- i) Jesus' day has not yet come.
- ii) Joel 2:1-2
  - (1) The Day of the Lord will be absolutely totally distinct.
- iii) Jeremiah 30:7
  - (1) "Jacob" refers to fleshly Jews.
  - (2) There will be a national deliverance for the Jews out of the Great Tribulation.
- iv) Daniel 12:1
- v) Matthew 24:21
- d) A solemn day
  - i) There has never been a day like this day.
  - ii) Revelation 6:15-17
- e) A sudden day
  - i) 1 Thessalonians 5:3
    - (1) This is the calm before the storm.
    - (2) Preachers may be called "calamity howlers" for this type of preaching.
    - (3) But the world will be caught by surprise because it will not hear and it will not heed God's Word.
      - (a) This was the same in Noah's time.
    - (4) The church will not go through the Great Tribulation because it is not a time of peace and safety.
      - (a) The time of peace and safety is when the day comes and the church is delivered out of it.
  - ii) Matthew 24:36-39
    - (1) Jesus is referring to the day of His coming.
    - (2) What were the days of Noah like?
      - (a) Life continued as normal.
      - (b) God called Noah into the ark. Then the flood came and it was too late.
      - (c) This was a solemn day and it was a sudden day.
- f) A sure day
  - i) 1 Thessalonians 5:3
  - ii) It is a day like unto a pregnant woman, it is coming.
    - (1) So it is with this judgment.

#### 4) ENDURE A SURROUNDING DARKNESS (1THESSALONIANS 5:4-9)

- a) We must endure a surrounding darkness.
  - i) The world is already in darkness.
    - (1) Moral darkness
    - (2) Spiritual darkness
    - (3) Social darkness
    - (4) Political darkness
  - ii) We must not sleep; the world is asleep.



- (1) The world has been put to sleep by the devil.
- b) Be aware and wise up.
  - i) 1 Thessalonians 5:5
  - ii) Christians are the only ones who can make sense of what is going on.
- c) Be awake and get up.
  - i) 1 Thessalonians 5:6-7
  - ii) The stage is set for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
    - (1) This is not a theory to be discussed, it is a truth to be lived.
    - (2) Luke 19:13
      - (a) "Occupy" means to do your job; getting the world ready for His coming.
- d) Be alert and dress up.
  - i) 1 Thessalonians 5:8
  - ii) Keep your heart right.
    - (1) The breastplate of faith and love.
    - (2) We need to love Jesus and one another.
    - (3) We need to put our faith where God put our sins; on the Lord Jesus.
    - (4) Without the breastplate we are not ready to live in these dark days.
  - iii) Keep your head right.
    - (1) The helmet of the hope of salvation.
      - (a) We are not to have a hope-so salvation but a know-so salvation.
      - (b) In the Bible, the word "hope" means absolute certainty, rock-ribbed certainty based on the Word of God.
      - (c) The Second Coming is called "the Blessed Hope."
- e) We need to know that we know that we are saved.
  - i) Because we are living in surrounding darkness.

## 5) EXPERIENCE A SURE DELIVERANCE (1 THESSALONIANS 5:9-11)

- a) "Salvation" in this passage means deliverance.
- b) The fact that Jesus is coming at any moment is a fact that will comfort and it will edify.
- c) Reasons why the church will be taken out before the Great Tribulation:
  - i) Explanation
    - (1) 1 Thessalonians 5:9
    - (2) The Tribulation is the great day of God's wrath.
      - (a) God chastises His children, but God never pours out His wrath on His children.
      - (b) God's wrath is for the unsaved.
      - (c) God has not appointed His children to wrath.
    - (3) 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10
      - (a) Jesus delivered us from the wrath to come.
      - (b) Genesis 7:16-17
        - (i) The flood didn't come until Noah was taken out and safely in the ark.
      - (c) Luke 17:26-30
        - (i) The days of Lot were marked by sexual perversion and economic prosperity.
        - (ii) Ezekiel 16:49



- (d) Sin that used to slink down back alleys now struts down main streets.
- (e) Before the flood came, God took Noah out and put him in the ark.
- (f) Before God destroyed Sodom with fire and brimstone, God sent an angel to tell Lot to get out of the city.
  - (i) God would not pour out His wrath upon His man Lot even though Lot was a compromising, worldly Christian.
- ii) Expectation
  - (1) 1 Thessalonians 5:10
    - (a) Paul was expecting Jesus in his lifetime.
      - (i) Paul was not wrong in his thinking.
    - (b) 1 Thessalonians 4:17
      - (i) Even 2,000 years ago they were living on the edge of eternity.
      - (ii) 1 John 2:18
  - (2) If the Tribulation comes first, then we are not looking for Christ, we are looking for anti-christ.
    - (a) Paul was looking for the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - (3) When you are looking for the Tribulation to come, rather than looking up, you are looking around.
- iii) Edification
  - (1) 1 Thessalonians 5:11
  - (2) The fact that Jesus is coming at any moment is a great comfort and a great edification.
  - (3) If we believe that the church is going to go through seven years of a day so horrible that Jesus, Jeremiah, Daniel and Joel said, "There will never, ever, ever be a day like that," that would not edify us.
    - (a) It is not, "Even so come, Great Tribulation." It is, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."
      - (i) Revelation 22:20
  - (4) We are not looking for antichrist, we are looking for Christ.
  - (5) We are waiting for the trumpet to sound.

## 6) CONCLUSION

- a) We can expect a surprising day.
- b) We can escape a sudden destruction.
- c) We must endure a surrounding darkness.
- d) We can experience a sure deliverance.
- e) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- f) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
  - i) Romans 3:23
  - ii) Romans 10:9-10
  - iii) Romans 10:13
  - iv) Acts 16:31
  - v) John 3:16



# A Thief in the Night

**SERMON REFERENCE:** 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Would you take God's Word and find First Thessalonians chapter 5. A man parked his automobile in front of his house and he did what no man should do, he left the key in the ignition thinking he'd be right back out. When he came out, the automobile was gone. His house keys and other keys were there in the ignition and he felt that horrible, sinking feeling that anybody would feel who'd done such a thing. He reported the automobile as stolen, but the police did not find it immediately. But behold, the next morning that automobile was parked in his driveway, washed, filled with gasoline, the keys back in the ignition, sitting there, pristine in condition. And there was a note and the note said, "I am sorry that I took your car. I was in an emergency, I had to have transportation. The car has been washed, it has been taken care of, it is filled with gasoline, and here are some complimentary tickets to the Dallas football team, the Dallas Cowboys, for you and your wife." When he read that, the man said, "Well, you know, nobody should steal an automobile, but this man can't be all bad, whoever it was that stole my car, can't be all bad." And so the man and his wife who normally would not go to see the Dallas Cowboys play football went to see the Dallas Cowboys play football. When they returned home, the house had been cleaned out. A thief had come. A very clever thief.

I want to talk to you tonight, this afternoon, this morning, whenever it is, on this subject, "A Thief in the Night." Look if you will here in First Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 1 through 11, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 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, but ye, brethren, are not in darkness that they should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day. Ye are not of the night nor of the darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober, for they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 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. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us. That whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together and edify one another, even as also ye do."

Now the purpose of our message today is to get you ready for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we believe with all of our heart that Jesus is coming, and what an incredible time this is to be living between two mountain peaks, Mount Calvary and the blood-drenched slopes of Mount Calvary and Mount Zion, the sun-lit peaks of glory, living between the crucifixion and the coronation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And I want you to be ready. "When He shall come with trumpet sound, oh, may I then in Him be found, dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne."

There are four things that'll help you to get ready, four things you need to understand; four truths that are in the passage that I just read to you. Number one, here's something you can expect: **you can expect a surprising day.** We can expect a surprising day. Look again in First Thessalonians 5 verses 1 and 2, look at it, "But the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, for you





yourselves know perfectly the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." Now how does a thief in the night come? Well he comes surprisingly. No thief ever wrote a note to you and said, "Tonight I'm going to rob your house." He comes when you're not expecting it and so it is with the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And Paul told these people, "I don't need to remind you again of the times and the seasons." Now, Paul was not setting a date. What he was saying is two things. First of all, the certainty, secondly the uncertainty. The certainty, He is coming. The uncertainty, we do not know when. He comes but He comes as a thief in the night.

Acts chapter 1 verses 6 through 8. The disciples were there with our Lord on the mount of ascension. He's getting ready to go back to Heaven. They, like you, they wanted to know about prophecy and beginning in verse 6, "When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, 'Lord, Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' And He said unto them, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power.'" Anybody who sets a date is disobeying the Lord. It is not for you to know. You remember in 1988 a man wrote a book called: 88 Reasons Why Jesus Christ is Coming in 1988." He made a fool of himself. The Bible says, "It's not for you to know." But He goes on to say, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto Me." And what is He saying? Don't go around setting dates, get your heads out of the clouds of prophecy and get your feet on the pavement of soul-winning and share and get people ready for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Now, I don't know when He's coming, you don't know when He's coming. We all have a feeling that we're living on the edge of eternity and that's what this series of messages is about, and I'll tell you one thing, it's 2,000 years nearer than it's ever been before. Jesus Christ is coming. Listen, He came on time, He was born on time, He died on time, He rose on time, and He's coming again in His own time. He may seem slow, but He will never be late. And the Bible says that, "God is not in a hurry," Second Peter 3 verse 8, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." You may say, "Well, it's been 2,000 years since He promised to come again." In God's heart and God's mind, it's been no longer than two days. But He goes on to say in that same Second Peter passage in verse 10, "But the Day of the Lord will come, it will come." And the Day of the Lord as we're going to see in a moment is a very troubling time. The church will be taken out at the Rapture, but there's coming a time known as the Day of the Lord when God is going to pour out His wrath upon this world, and I'm going to tell you this, that even now, right now, the raging waters of God's wrath are furiously pounding against the dam of His mercy. I don't know when, I know God in mercy is holding back this day because Second Peter chapter 3 verse 9, he says, "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But you can expect a surprising day. Jesus is going to come and some may not be ready.

Here's the second thing. Not only can you expect a surprising day, but **you can escape a sudden destruction.** Look now in First Thessalonians 5 verse 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." Now notice, "They shall not escape," but he's not talking to you. If you know the Lord, you will escape. The rapture of the church will take you out before this day comes, this day of sudden destruction. Now what is he talking about? He's talking about the Great Tribulation. But there's coming a day that the Bible calls sudden destruction and it's right there in verse 2. He calls it the Day of the Lord.



Remember when they were crucifying Jesus? He's going down that Via Dolorosa and the women are weeping and He says in Luke 23 verse 28, "Don't weep for me. Weep for yourselves. This is your day." "My day is not yet come." His day is going to come and it's going to be a very solemn day.

Let me give you some Scriptures that talk about the day of the Lord. For example, Joel chapter 2 verses 1 and 2, "Blow the trumpet of Zion and sound an alarm in My holy mountain, let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the Day of the Lord cometh. It is nigh at hand, a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness as the morning spread upon the mountains a great people in the strong," now notice this phrase, "there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations." What's he saying? He's saying the Day of the Lord is a day that is absolutely totally distinct. Never, never has there been a day like this. There've been unmitigated horrors of war, torture. We think of ethnic cleansing. But what he's saying here; there has never, never, never been a day like this day. That's Joel 2 verses 1 and 2.

Listen to Jeremiah chapter 30 and verse 7, "Alas, for that day is great, so none is like it." "None is like it." "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble," Jacob is the name for fleshly Jews, "but he shall be saved out of it." There's going to come a national deliverance for the Jew, out of this Great Tribulation, he's going to be saved out of it.

And then Daniel chapter 12 and verse 1. Daniel speaks of this same day, "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people," that is for the Jew, "and there shall be a time of trouble," listen to this, "such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time. And at that time Thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book." Now notice this, Joel said, "There's never been the like of this day." Jeremiah says, "There's none like it." Daniel says, "There's never been a time like this." And then Jesus said in Matthew chapter 24 and verse 21, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

Now folks, listen to me, there is coming **a solemn day**. This day that you need to escape is a solemn day. Never, never, never has there been a day like it. As a matter of fact, in Revelation chapter 6 verses 15 through 17, the Bible says, "That men are going into the caves and the dens of the Earth and are going to ask the mountains to fall upon them because they say, 'The great day of His wrath has come, and who shall be able to stand.'" The antichrist, who will rule at this time, will make Hitler seem like a Boy Scout.

It's going to be a solemn day; it's going to be **a sudden day**. Notice again in First Thessalonians 5 verse 3, "When they say peace and safety then sudden destruction." It's like the calm before the storm. In this kind of preaching you're called a calamity howler, but this world is going to be caught by surprise because it will not hear and it will not heed God's Word. It was the same in Noah's time. This is one reason I don't believe the church is going to go through the Great Tribulation, because the Great Tribulation is not a time of peace and safety, but the time of peace and safety is when this day comes, it's when it comes and we're delivered out of it.

Notice how it was in Noah's time. Put in your margin Matthew 24 verses 36 and following through verse 39. Jesus said, again, talking about His coming, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no,



not the angels of Heaven, but My Father only," now watch this, "but as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." Now what were the days of Noah like? Well listen, "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark and knew not until the flood came and took them all away. So shall the coming of the Son of Man be."

Now, what was it like? Well, the daily round of life was going on. They were having weddings, they were having parties, they were having business, they were just going on. That's the day of Noah. And then one day God said, "Noah, come on out, come on into the ark," and then the flood came and then it was too late. It was a solemn day, it will be a solemn day. It will be a sudden day.

Now, I know that what I'm talking about doesn't fit the intelligentsia of this day and this age. I can imagine a convocation back in Noah's time. Noah's been preaching that God's going to destroy the world with a flood and so they decided they better at least have a convocation about it, find out whether this calamity howler is telling the truth or not. And so I can see upon the dais they have three very important people. Up there they have a scientist, Dr. Francis Formaldehyde. And then up there they also have a philosopher, Dr. Flavius Fluffyhead. And up there also they have a minister, a cleric, Dr. Earnest Eartickler. And they're up there on the platform and they're having a symposium to find out whether or not the flood is going to come.

And so first of all, they ask this imminent scientist, Dr. Francis Formaldehyde. "Dr. Formaldehyde, will there be a flood?" And he says, "Well, science cannot speak to these things. You know, we only deal with empirical proof, but I can tell you that since the time that we have measured history there has never been a break in the reign of natural law! So, from a scientific point of view, I would say that it's very doubtful that we'll have this kind of a flood." Well, people are feeling a little better.

And so then they, they ask Dr. Flavius Fluffyhead. Now Dr. Fluffyhead, he's, you know, he's a finger bumper and he sits there and he just smiles benignly and he says, "Well, philosophy deals with these areas where science cannot, but let me say philosophically that it would seem to me from a philosophical point of view, that if there is a God and if this God did create this world and if He did create these people, the same God who created them knows their weaknesses and their proclivities and that's the way He made them and He certainly would not destroy His work if indeed He did such a thing. Philosophically I would say, 'No, I don't believe there will be a flood.'"

And then they will call upon the reverend to talk. Now, Dr. Earnest Eartickler. "Well, Dr. Eartickler, you have been off to the seminary and you have studied and you've poured through the realms of knowledge, tell us, Dr. Eartickler, will there be a flood." Now he's not as dispassionate as the scientists or the philosophers. As a matter of fact, he's down-right angry, he's red in the face. He points a finger at God's man, at Noah. And he says, "This unlettered, uneducated, unseminary-trained religious fanatic has slandered the character of God. Doesn't he know that God is love? And does he think that a loving God would bring judgment? I can tell you, ladies and gentlemen, if Noah did happen to hear something about a flood, it was not literal water." "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be." You see, this day is a solemn day. This day will be a surprising day. They're eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.



And then I'm going to say, folks, **it is a sure day**. Look again if you will in this passage of Scripture. First Thessalonians 5 verse 3, "For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child." You see, the world is pregnant with judgment and this solemn day, this sudden day is a sure day. What he's saying is, it's like a woman who's going to give birth. One woman was about seven months along and somebody said to her husband, "Is your wife expecting?" He said, "She's not expecting, it's a sure thing." And so it is with this judgment.

Now, we can't escape this judgment and I'm going to tell you about that later on. First of all, we can expect a surprising day. Number two, we can escape a sudden destruction. Number three, **we must endure a surrounding darkness**. Look in First Thessalonians 5 verses 4 through 9, "But ye, brethren," talking about the saved, "are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day. Ye are not of the night nor of the darkness, therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober, for they that sleep, sleep in the night and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. 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. For God hath not appointed us to wrath."

Now, we must endure a surrounding darkness. The world right now is already in darkness. Moral darkness, spiritual darkness, social darkness, political darkness, and we must not be asleep. The world is asleep. The world has been chloroformed by the devil, and the world is asleep in a drunken stupor.

Now, let me tell you what you should do as a child of God today. Listen to me. Number one, you should **be aware and wise up**. Look in First Thessalonians 5 verse 5, "Ye are all the children of the light and the children of the day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness." And so what you need to do is to be aware, to wise up. We're the only ones, the only ones in this world today who can make sense of what is going on. We need to be aware. Are you aware of these things? That's why I'm preaching this series of messages. We may not see a new millennium. Jesus is coming. You say, "Well everything looks fine." That's exactly my point. "When they say peace and safety, then sudden destruction."

We should be aware and wise up and we should **be awake and get up**. Look in First Thessalonians 5 verses 6 and 7, "Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober, for they that sleep, sleep in the night and they that be drunken are drunken in the night." Folks come to church on Sunday morning with a sign around their neck, says, "Please don't disturb." I hope that this sermon will not be a lullaby, it'll be a reveille. It'll be an alarm clock to wake you up. The stage is being set and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is not a theory to be discussed, it's a truth to be lived. You're not supposed to put on a white robe and go sit on a mountain top. Jesus said in Luke 19:13, "You occupy till I come." What does it mean to occupy? If you have an occupation, that's your job. Get busy bringing this world to Jesus Christ.

Here's a third thing. Not only should you be aware and wise up and be awake and get up, you should **be alert and dress up**. Look in First Thessalonians 5 verse 8, "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." There are two things that you need to be wearing when you walk out of this auditorium. First of all, you need to get your heart right. That's the breastplate of faith and love, that covers your heart. You need to love Jesus; you need to love one another. You need to put your faith where God put your sins, on the Lord Jesus



Christ. That's the breastplate, you need to wear that. If you don't wear that, you're not ready to live in these dark days.

And then, not only keep your heart right, but you keep your head right. Put on the helmet of salvation. The helmet of the hope of salvation. Now what does He mean the hope of salvation? Does that mean I hope I'm saved? No, that isn't what that means at all. You're not to have a hope-so salvation, you're to have a know-so salvation. And why does the Bible use the word the hope of salvation? Because the Bible uses the word hope in a way that we don't use it today. In the Bible, the word hope means absolute certainty, rock-rib certainty based on the Word of God. For example, the Second Coming of Jesus is called The Blessed Hope. You are to have your heart covered with faith and love and you are to have a helmet of absolute certainty that you're saved.

I would not go one day without knowing that I'm saved. Listen, God in Heaven is listening to me. I would not go one day not knowing that I'm saved, willingly go that day for one million or one billion dollars, not one day. You need to know that you know that you know that you're saved. We are living in surrounding darkness. Put on the breastplate of faith and love and put on the helmet of the hope, the certainty of salvation! You need to be alert and dress up.

Now here's the fourth and final thing I want to say that this passage teaches us. We can expect a surprising day. We can escape a sudden destruction. We must endure a surrounding darkness. The world is in darkness, we're children of light. But here's the fourth and final thing: **we will experience a sure deliverance.** If we'll do these other things, we will experience a sure deliverance.

Look in First Thessalonians 5 beginning in verse 9 on through verse 11. Now look at this. There're some theologians who believe that the church is going to go through the great tribulation. This day that I told you, there's none other like it, but look at this, "For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." The word salvation means deliverance. "Deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." Now watch this, "Wherefore comfort yourselves together and edify one another even as also ye do." Now, the fact that Jesus Christ is coming at any moment is a fact that will comfort and it will edify.

Now I want to tell you why I believe that the church is going to be taken out before the Great Tribulation and I want to give you three reasons. You're going to find them right here. I want you to write these three words down: explanation, expectation, edification.

Now in **explanation**, look in First Thessalonians 5 verse 9. How does Paul explain it? "For God hath not appointed us to wrath." Remember that the Tribulation is the great day of His wrath? God chastises His children, but God never pours His wrath upon His children. God's wrath is for the unsaved and God hath not appointed us to wrath. Go back to the first chapter of this book, First Thessalonians 1 verse 9. Look at it, "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had among you, how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from Heaven whom He raised up from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Jesus delivered us from the wrath to come.



I'll give you two classic examples. We've talked about in the day of Noah. In the day of Noah, the flood did not come until Noah was taken out and put in the ark. Genesis 7 verse 16 and 17. The other classic example, as the day of Lot. And by the way, in Luke chapter 17 verses 28 to 30, Jesus also said, "As it was in the days of Lot, when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorra with brimstone, that's the way it's going to be when I come again."

And what were the days of Lot marked by? Do you know what the days of Lot; Lot lived in Sodom. The days of Lot were marked by sexual perversion and the days of Lot were marked by economic prosperity. The Dow Jones, if they had had one, would've been very high the day the fire fell on Sodom. "How do you know that, Adrian?" The Bible says in the book of Ezekiel in chapter 16 and verse 49, "This was the sin of your sister Sodom, idleness and fullness of bread, and they were not ashamed when they committed abomination, they didn't strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy." But you think about this, the sexual abomination, the sin that used to slink down back allies struts down main streets. They were not ashamed, they couldn't blush. But there was so much idleness, fullness of bread, they didn't even need to work! I'm telling you, it was a time of economic prosperity and it was a time of sexual perversion. And Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Lot," as it was in Noah, "as it was in the days of Lot."

Now, listen, before the flood came, God took Noah out and God put Noah in the ark. Before God destroyed Sodom with fire and brimstone, the angel said to Lot, "Come and get out of the city, I can't do anything until you come out of this city." God would not pour His wrath upon His man Lot even though Lot was a compromising, worldly Christian. Lot was taken out before the fire fell. Noah was taken out before the flood came. And so, first of all, there's an explanation. Look at it again in First Thessalonians 5 verse 9, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath."

Now not only is there an explanation, but there's an **expectation**. Look in First Thessalonians 5 verse 10, "Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." Now Paul was expecting Christ. He says, "We." Paul was expecting Jesus in his lifetime. Was Paul wrong? No, Paul was right. You go back to First Thessalonians chapter 4 and verse 17. Paul is explaining this rapture and he says, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up with them." He included himself. I mean, that was 2,000 years ago, 2,000 years ago they were living on the edge of eternity. We're always on the edge of eternity. The apostle John said in his first epistle, in First John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last time." And so Paul was expecting Christ. You should be expecting Christ.

Now, here's the point. If the Tribulation comes first, then we're not looking for Christ, we're looking for antichrist. Paul was looking for the Lord Jesus Christ. When you're looking for the Tribulation to come, rather than looking up, you're looking around.

Now here's the third and the final reason and I'm finished. I'm telling you folks, why we need to be looking for Jesus at any moment. First of all there's an explanation, we're not appointed to wrath. Secondly, there's an expectation, Jesus can come at any moment. Thirdly, there is the **edification**. Look in First Thessalonians 5 verse 11, "Wherefore, comfort yourselves together and edify one another, even as also you do." Now, the fact that Jesus is coming at any moment is a great comfort and a great edification. If I believe that the church is going to go through seven years of a day so horrible, so terrible that



Jesus said and Jeremiah said and Daniel said and Joel said, "There's never, never, never, never, never been a day like that," you think that'll edify me? Even so, come, Great Tribulation? No, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 22:20. I'm not looking for antichrist, I'm looking for Christ. I'm waiting for the trumpet sound, at any moment, just as God said, "Noah, go in to that ark." And just as God said, "Lot, get out of that city." He's going to say, "Adrian, come up hither and the trumpet will sound." We're going to meet Jesus just like that.

Now folks, this is serious business. We can expect a surprising day. We can escape a sudden destruction. We must endure a surrounding darkness. And, friend, we can experience a sure deliverance.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. I wonder how many can say, "Pastor Rogers, if Jesus Christ were to come at this moment, like a thief in the night, suddenly, surely, to take away His church, I would be ready." I want you to answer the question for you.

Now if you couldn't answer that question, I've got good news for you. You can put on today, the breastplate of faith and love. You can put on the helmet of salvation. You can be saved today, once and for all, now and forever, by trusting Jesus Christ. And I want you to pray this prayer and I want you to pray it from your heart. "Dear God, I know that You love me and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me and You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus; right now this moment with all of my heart, like a child. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, cleanse me. Save me, Jesus." Pray that from your heart. "Save me, Jesus." Did you ask Him? Then thank Him. Pray this way, "Jesus, I believe You're the Son of God. I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood. I believe that You were raised from the dead and I now just thank You for saving me. You're my Lord, my Savior, my Master. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be and I'll live for You, not in order to be saved, but because I am saved and I will not be ashamed of You. I'll make it public if You'll just give me the strength. In Your name I pray. Amen."



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