

1Thessalonians, Chapter Five, Lesson One

GOD'S GIFT OF SOBRIETY 1Thessalonians 5:1-6

STIMULATE

** Today we embark upon a journey through the exciting climax of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. In our study together last week we were called to display "**Comforting Behavior**" to those around us by sharing the good news of Christ coming for His church in the event known as the **Rapture**.

I hope that you are faithful to encourage those around you with this wonderful news.

MOTIVATE

** As we now turn the corner into chapter five of this marvelous epistle, we stand on the threshold of four magnificent gifts which our great God has for each of His children. While learning from the apostle Paul about the day of the Lord, we are also going to see four specific gifts which are ours by the grace of God. They are:

GOD'S GIFT OF SOBRIETY - 1Thessalonians 5:1-6

GOD'S GIFT OF ENCOURAGEMENT - 1Thessalonians 5:7-11

GOD'S GIFT OF EXCELLENCE - 1Thessalonians 5:12-18

GOD'S GIFT OF SANCTIFICATION - 1Thessalonians 5:19-28

Let's read through our passage for today to set our minds on the Word of God and prepare us for "**God's Gift of Sobriety**".

Read Passage (V.1-6)

Opening Prayer

God's Gift of Sobriety

INVESTIGATE

V. 1 ** When we finished our study of chapter four, what event in human history did we see?

The Rapture of Christ's Church!

** Let's begin with a close look at Paul's opening words here in chapter five. "Now as to..." - what do you suppose this prepositional phrase is indicating?

He is introducing a change in subject. "Peri de" is used by Paul eight times in his writing and each time it indicated a change of subject matter.

cf. 1Corinthians 7:1, 7:25, 8:1, 12:1 16:1 & 12, 1Thessalonians 4:9

** Look at verse two in our passage for today, what would be the new topic he is about to discuss?

"...the day of the Lord..."

** Why would Paul say here in verse one that they "have no need of anything to be written to [them]"?

Because he had already taught them in person. cf. 1Thessalonians 2:13, 2Thessalonians 2:5

****** What is significant about Paul using the terms "times and epochs"?

Those are the exact terms used by Christ Himself as he was leaving His disciples at the ascension. That is why Paul had instructed them. cf. Acts 1:7-9

V. 2 ****** According to Paul, what did the Thessalonians fully know about the day of the Lord?

They knew that no one knows when it will take place because it will come upon man "like a thief in the night"!

****** What is the day of the Lord?

Frequently, Scripture uses this phrase referring to a broad period of time containing the wrathful judgement of God against sin.

cf. 2Peter 3:10, Amos 5:18-20 and Zephaniah 1:14-18

The problem with some of those in Thessalonica is that with the difficult trials they were going through, they thought that the Tribulation had begun. cf. 1Thessalonians 2:14

V. 3 ****** Paul wants to reassure them that they have not missed the Rapture and that they are not in the Tribulation. What expression will be trendy just prior to the Great Tribulation?

"While they are saying, 'Peace and Safety!'"

****** To what is that referring?

Daniel's prophecy about the "seventieth" week. All see - Daniel 9:24-27

V.25 - King Artaxerxes of Persia issued the decree to restore Jerusalem on March 5, 444 B.C. It would be exactly sixty-nine weeks (periods of seven years) until the Messiah would enter Jerusalem! That is 173,880 days when calculating by the 360 day/year Jewish calendar. cf. Nehemiah 2:1-8

Just as a footnote:

From March 5, 444 B.C. to March 30, 33 A.D. (the day of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem) was exactly 173,880 days.

V.26 - After the sixty-nine weeks (483 years) and before the seventieth, Messiah will be killed, the "prince who is to come" will use his people to destroy the city and temple (this took place in 70 A.D.).

V.27 - During the seventieth week, the Anti-Christ makes a "firm covenant" with Israel. Under his protection they rebuild the Temple and restore their worship. In the middle of the week (3-1/2 years) he brings about the "Abomination of Desolation" spoken of by Christ in Matthew 24:15.

Now back in verse three of 1Thessalonians five:

****** What phrase does Paul use to describe the day of the Lord which hits these people who are fooling themselves by saying, "Peace and Safety"?

"...destruction will come upon them suddenly..." Lit. "sudden destruction is at hand suddenly"

****** What metaphor does he use to explain how inescapable this judgement is going to be?

"...like birth pangs upon a women with child..." When she has gone full term and entered labor, she is going to have a baby. And so for them, "they shall not escape"!

V. 4 ****** The individuals within Israel who made this covenant with Satan are in total darkness - they do not have a clue about what God is going to do in His judgement of sin. Is that also true about the brethren?

No - You are not in darkness!

****** Will we be caught off guard by this "thief"?

No - by the grace of God we understand that His judgement is coming upon mankind, but we also know that He has delivered us from that judgement! cf. John 3:18, 5:24

V. 5 ****** Why is that, how does Paul describe us?

We are "all sons of light and sons of day".

****** Were we ever of the darkness?

Absolutely! cf. Ephesians 5:8

****** What have we become through our faith in Christ?

We have become His light to the world! cf. Matthew 5:14-16

****** How do you know that Paul is serious about our proper understanding, relative to which side of the battle we belong?

After stating the positive, he repeats the idea from the negative! "We are not of night nor of darkness". Paul wants our thinking to be clear and truly different than that of the world around us.

V. 6 ****** Since we are very different from the world (like night and day) what does Paul want us to avoid?

He wants us to not sleep as others do!

****** What does that mean?

From the context, sleepers are not prepared!

Luke 12:45-46 - The lazy servant.

Matthew 25:3, 11-13 - The unprepared virgins.

****** If we are not to be of the darkness, not to be lazy or unprepared - what does Paul want us to be?

"...let us be alert and sober".

****** Herein lies the first of four gifts from our gracious God which we learn about in this last chapter of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. What does it mean to "be alert"?

gregoreo - lit. "to be awake, to watch"

** What part of our being will be used to obey this instruction?

Our minds! This is a call for "Thinking Biblically" by reading and comprehending all that God's word has for us and then applying it to our lives. We must not sleep our way through each day.

cf. Ephesians 4:22-24, Acts 20:31, 1Corinthians 16:13, 1Peter 5:8

** How are we to use our "alert" minds?

Soberly! nepho - lit. to abstain from wine, this term carries the idea of being "self-controlled" rather than substance controlled. We are not to allow deluding influences to pull us away from full time service for our Lord. cf. 1Peter 1:13, 4:7

** This is a very challenging call to arms. How can we do it?

Only by "**God's Gift of Sobriety**". Only when we allow Him to give us the desire for self-control will we be able to glorify our God with this kind of sober lifestyle. One that is under the control of His Word, prompted by His Spirit to do His will. cf. John 15:5, Philippians 4:13

EXTRICATE

** What was the problem for some believers living in Thessalonica? Why had they lost their self-control?

They had forgotten the instruction from God's word on the subject of the day of the Lord, which Paul had personally delivered to them.

DELINEATE

** What was the two-fold solution called for by Paul in verse six, which we too would do well to apply?

Be alert and sober. Think Biblically and always be under self-control.

EVALUATE

** How can we best do that? Here are two steps.

1. Read God's word - continually!

Colossians 3:16

2. Keep our minds fixed upon Christ!

Isaiah 26:3 (KJV)

ACTIVATE

** For us to bring glory to our Lord, we must use "**God's Gift of Sobriety**" so that we appear as children of light to the dark and dying world around us. Are you willing to display a self-controlled lifestyle which reflects the impact of God's Word upon your heart?

Let's pray and ask Him to give us this desire, for His glory sake!

Closing prayer