

How to Keep Awake for His Return, 1 Thess. 5.1-11
Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis • Season After Pentecost, Proper 28
Blessed Hope Missionary Fellowship • November 16, 2008

*Teachings are proactive for the next Sunday in advance. Unless otherwise noted,
all Scriptures are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).*



It's Almost Morning!

Dr. W. A. Criswell, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas Texas, said on one occasion on an airplane flight he found himself seated beside a well-known theologian. He desperately wanted to start a conversation and they did get to talk. The man told Dr. Criswell about how he had recently lost his little boy through death. Dr. Criswell listened as he told his story . . .

[The theologian said his little boy] had come home from school with a fever and we thought it was just one of those childhood things, but it was a very virulent form of meningitis. The doctor said we cannot save your little boy. He'll die. And so this seminary professor, loving his son as he did, sat by the bedside to watch this death vigil. It was the middle of the day and the little boy whose strength was going from him and whose vision and brain was getting clouded said, "Daddy, it's getting dark isn't it?" The professor said to his son, "Yes son it is getting dark, very dark." Of course it was very dark for him. He said, "Daddy, I guess it's time for me to go to sleep isn't it?" He said, "Yes, son, it's time for you to go to sleep." The professor said the little fellow had a way of fixing his pillow just so, and putting his head on his hands when he slept and he fixed his pillow like that and laid his head on his hands and said, "Good night Daddy. I will see you in the morning." He then closed his eyes in death and stepped over into heaven.

Dr. Criswell said the professor didn't say anymore after that. He just looked out the window of that airplane for a long time. Then he turned back and he looked at Dr Criswell with the scalding tears coming down his cheeks and he said, "Dr. Criswell, I can hardly wait till the morning."



KEEP AWAKE FOR HIS RETURN

We are children of the light, and children of the day

I. The Coming Day of the Lord, 1 Thess. 5.1-3

A. The times and the seasons, 1 Thess. 5.1

1 Thess. 5:1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

1. Times (*chronon*) and seasons (*kairon*), the historical moments and the prophetic calendar! (Clock time and nick-of-time time!)
2. Paul here suggests that he had already instructed the Thessalonians regarding the upcoming events on the calendar of God regarding the coming Day of the Lord
3. The precise positioning of the times had always been an apostolic curiosity, and it remains a mystery as to the specifics even now
 - a. A constant apostolic curiosity, Matthew 24:3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?"
 - b. Knowledge exclusive to the Father, Mark 13:30-32 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. [31] Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. [32] "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
 - c. The timetable of God stands sure, fixed by his own sovereign will, Acts 1:7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority."

B. The Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, 1 Thess. 5.2-3

1 Thess. 5:2-3 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. [3] While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

1. The day of the Lord: a future period of God's direct intervention into the affairs of the world

- a. A day of wrath and anger, Isaiah 13:9-11 Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. [10] For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. [11] I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.
 - b. A day of cataclysmic change, Joel 2:30-31 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. [31] The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.
 - c. A day of awesome distress, Zeph. 1:14-17 The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. [15] A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, [16] a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. [17] I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung.
2. That Day will come suddenly upon those unaware of its appearing, like a thief in the night
 - a. Stay awake, Matthew 24:42-44 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. [43] But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. [44] Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.
 - b. Be ready, Luke 12:39-40 But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. [40] You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."
 3. Jesus' reiteration to his church, Rev. 3:3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.
 4. When people claim peace and security, calamity will come, without escape (double negative in the Greek, *ou me*), 5.3
 - a. Sudden destruction comes upon the ill-prepared like the onslaught of labor pains upon a pregnant woman: *a graphic and potent metaphor of transition from a state of normalcy to chaos!*
 - b. Trembling and anguish, Psalm 48:6 Trembling took hold of them there, anguish as of a woman in labor.
 - c. Pangs and dismay, Isaiah 21:3 Therefore my loins are filled with anguish; pangs have seized me, like the pangs of a woman in labor; I am bowed down so that I cannot hear; I am dismayed so that I cannot see.
 - d. Writhing and groaning, Micah 4:10 Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.
 5. "They will not by any means escape", cf. Hebrews 2:3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,

II. Keep Awake and be sober, 1 Thess. 5.4-11

A. Children of light, children of the day, 1 Thess. 5.4-5

1 Thess. 5:4-5 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. [5] For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

1. Christ our Lord is the light of the world, the one in whom we trust, John 12:36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light. "When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.
2. We have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness through the victory of Christ, Col. 1:13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son
3. We have been called out of darkness into the light of the Lord, 1 Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. [10] Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received

mercy.

4. The darkness is waning and the true light is already shining, 1 John 2:8 At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.
5. The children of the world often show more ingenuity than the children of light, Luke 16:8 The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.
6. The missionary call is a proclamation and demonstration that results in folk turning from darkness to light, Acts 26:18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

B. Let us not sleep but rather be sober, 1 Thess. 5.6-8

1 Thess. 5:6-8 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. [7] For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. [8] But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

1. Once we were of darkness, but not now; we must walk as children of light, Eph. 5:8-14 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light [9] (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), [10] and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. [11] Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. [12] For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. [13] But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, [14] for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."
2. We are charged to walk in the day, for the day is at hand, Romans 13:11-13 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. [12] The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. [13] Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.
3. Wake up from your slumber and blindness, Isaiah 56:10 His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber.
4. Gethsemane snoozing as emblematic of not being alert to temptation, Luke 22:46 and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."
5. Sleep and drunkenness associated with the night, 1 Thess. 5:7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.
6. Metaphors of being awake and sobriety combined!, 1 Cor. 15:34 Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

C. The ubiquitous command: the call to stay awake and be sober, 1 Thess. 5.6

1. Given to all, Mark 13:37 And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."
2. To avoid temptation, Mark 14:38 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
3. Connecting to prevailing prayer, Luke 21:36 But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."
4. Be on the alert, Acts 20:31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.
5. Be watchful and firm, 1 Cor. 16:13 Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.
6. Persevere in the right, Eph. 6:18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,
7. Do it thankfully, Col. 4:2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.
8. Sober-mindedness is always fitting, 2 Tim. 4:5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.
9. Be self-controlled in light of the day, 1 Peter 4:7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

D. Destined not for wrath, but for salvation in the presence of Christ, 1 Thess. 5.9-11

1 Thess. 5:9-11 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. [11] Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

1. We are not destined for wrath
 - a. We are delivered from the wrath to come, 1 Thess. 1:10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.
 - b. The Lord's foundation is firm, 2 Tim. 2:19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."
2. We obtain salvation through the Lord Jesus
 - a. Glory is ours through Christ, 2 Thess. 2:13-14 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. [14] To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b. We have now received mercy, 1 Peter 2:10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
3. It is our destiny to live with him
 - a. Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's, Romans 14:8-9 If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. [9] For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.
 - b. In him we have been made righteous, 2 Cor. 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
 - c. We are his very own possession, Titus 2:14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.
 - d. Healed by his wounds, 1 Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.
 - e. Brought to God through Christ's suffering for sin, 1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,
4. Encourage and edify one another (give strength and courage to each other)
 - a. Encouraged to stay supple, Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
 - b. Meeting together to encourage as the Day draws near, Hebrews 10:25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.



Keep Awake!



IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW LOUD YOU SING ... SHE'S SLEEPING IN THE SPIRIT

According to apostolic testimony, when all seems bright and beautiful to the world, then sudden destruction is destined for its system; none will escape. The Lord God of the prophets has revealed the truth through his apostles that Jesus of Nazareth will return in power to establish a Kingdom that will never end or be turned over to another. We must not sleep for we are not children of the darkness, and we must not drowse, for we are children of the day. As we conclude this Church Year season, how significant it is for us to be reminded that we must not sleep as others do, but rather, we must stay awake, be sober, and eagerly await the coming of Christ. Keep awake, and be patient for the coming of the Lord.

The Season After Pentecost: Proper 28 (Year A, 2008)

How to Keep Awake for His Return, 1 Thess. 5.1-11.
November 16, 2008.

1 Thess. 5:4-6 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. [5] For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. [6] So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

We are not like those who dwell in the darkness, who are oblivious to the prospect of the Son's coming again, and we are not oriented as those who will be taken off guard, to be surprised as by a thief in the night. Rather, Paul declares that we are children of light and of the day, neither of night nor darkness. We must live true to our identity, not sleeping as some do, but keeping awake, staying sober, being vigilant and prepared, waiting for the coming of the Victorious One, ready to receive the reward he has for those who love his appearing. In a world blind with greed and lust, let us ever be ready for the entrance of Christ into this world, for he alone is our hope and our confidence. Stay alert, and keep awake.

Morning Collect: Eternal God our Father, keep us awake by Your Spirit, ever vigilant and ever ready, always abounding in the work of Christ and awaiting his coming in glory. Soon, we will see his face. In his name we pray, amen.

Evening Collect: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Light of the world, shine through us, Your children of light and the day, that others may see our good works, glorify Your Father in heaven, and come to You, the only Savior and Lord of the world. Keep us awake and ready for Your return. In Your name we pray, amen.

Memory Verse: **MTB, New Beginnings in Christ: Series 1. Topic 2, Repentance and Faith, Hear of God's Love in Christ.**
1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit