Grace Fellowship Church Fort Worth, TX Rick Griffith

4 Jan 1987 Message 9 of 10

NIV 30 Minutes

**When the Saints Go Marching Out**

***1 Thessalonians 5:1-11***

**Topic:** Rapture

**Subject:** The time of God's judgment after the Rapture is unknown

**Complement:** so we should be self-controlled and prepared to leave this earth.

**Purpose:** The listeners will be exhorted to live alert, self-controlled lives in light of our uncertain amount of time remaining to serve God.

**Meditation:**

**Reading:**

**Song:**

# Introduction

### Interest: Jesus can come at any moment (YouTube video clip of Rapture).

### Need: Last week we looked at the Rapture in detail in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, but I talked very little about the time of the Rapture

### Main Idea: In today's passage we'll notice that the time will be completely unexpected so we need to be as prepared as possible--specifically, by living self-controlled lives.

### Background: The section we studied last week about the Rapture presented a joyful hope, but this one gives a solemn warning. The Thessalonians had **not** heard the **first** exhortation about the Rapture before but they **had** heard **this** one we'll study today" (*BKC* ).

### Text: Our text this morning is 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.

### Preview: The passage breaks down nicely into two major sections: verses 1-3 and 4-11.

#### The first section addresses the time of the Rapture and the second speaks about how believers should live in light of that time.

#### Actually, the first 3 verses tell us that no one knows the time, and the last 8 verses reveal that since the Rapture will be totally unexpected we should live in a self-controlled manner.

(This passage gives a solemn warning. What is this solemn warning? Verses 1-3 tell us that…)

# I. The day of the Lord will come unexpectedly (5:1-3).

**[People will be surprised when the Tribulation Period begins.]**

## Paul saw no need to instruct the church about the signs preceding the day of the Lord (5:1).

(Why not? Because…)

## The Thessalonians knew that the day of the Lord would come unexpectedly (5:2).

### What is this day of the Lord?

#### It's not a new teaching since it is spoken of often in the Old Testament.

##### Isaiah spoke of this period saying that this day will "make the land a devastation" [in Isaiah 13:9-11].

##### Joel declares that there will be "wonders in the sky and upon the earth, blood, fire, and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon into blood" [2:30-31].

#### This is a future time period in which God will be more directly involved in the affairs of men than He has since Christ was on the earth.

#### Therefore, it is the period of judgment and blessing stretching from the Rapture to the Great White Throne Judgment.

#### In this passage Paul is referring only to the judgment aspect of the day of the Lord during the Great Tribulation, however.

#### The fullest treatment of this subject in Scripture is given in Revelation 6–19.

##### Theses chapters mention the most severe earthquakes ever to strike the earth—so strong they level mountains.

##### Huge, 100 pound hailstones will ravage the land.

##### Boils, worldwide darkness, and submission to a world dictator called the Antichrist will afflict the people of the earth.

##### All in all, it will be the most awful judgment of God upon unbelievers that the world has ever experienced or ever will experience.

### Verse 2 says that this day will come like a thief in the night--that is, it will be totally unexpected, a complete surprise.

(Non-believers will especially be surprised since… )

## The Tribulation will strike when world conditions look calm and secure (5:3).

### Notice how the pronouns "you" and "we" which we saw repeatedly since 4:13 now change to "they" and "them."

#### This indicates that Paul is **not** including himself or his Christian readers in the day of the Lord prophecy.

#### The "they" and "them" evidently refers to non-Christians who are left just after the Rapture of the Church.

#### My friend, we're not going to be there!

### Paul's illustration of a woman in labor is a good one--and very timely at that.

#### At any moment within the next ten days Susan will be sitting calmly, probably planning on doing some project at home like wallpapering our dining room wall.

#### Then, suddenly, our first child will decide to make his or her entrance into the world--undoubtedly with little warning.

#### When that moment comes Susan will say, "Now, hold on there, little one. You just wait until I finish wallpapering the house…"

#### Hardly! Everything else will take second priority! As this passage says, she "shall not escape!" No turning back!

#### A few months ago a friend of ours in Dallas went to her doctor during her third trimester for a regular checkup. As the doctor examined her she asked, "So when do you think the baby will come?"

##### “Oh, about one hour!" the doctor said.

##### They rushed her straight to the hospital to deliver the baby just in time.

##### So shall the coming of Christ be quickly and at a time we do not expect.

(Verses 1-3 have shown us that the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly. No-one will know when the Rapture and the Tribulation will occur, and that includes Christians--you and me.

The non-believers can't really prepare for that day since few believe it will ever happen, but since **we** know it will occur **we** can be prepared. But how? What should we be doing to prepare for the Rapture? As the late Francis Shaeffer used to say, "How should we then live?"

Verses 4-11 give us the answer in three exhortations by saying that…)

# II. We should live in such a way that we'll be unashamed at His coming (5:4-11).

**[Since Christ may come at any time we should constantly be prepared for Him rather than being embarrassed when He arrives.]**

(This is summarized in three commands, the first of which is…)

## Be prepared by being alert and self-controlled (5:4-8).

### Again, we see a change in pronouns so that Paul is back to talking about Christians.

### I observe four comparisons here:

#### Darkness verses light,

#### Night verses day,

#### Sleepiness verses alertness, and

#### Drunkenness verses being self-controlled (or sober in the NASB and KJV).

### I think these four comparisons point out the differences between unbelievers and believers in light of Christ's return.

#### Unbelievers are in the dark because they have no revelation from God about the day of the Lord; therefore, they are slack, carousing around and unprepared for Christ's return.

#### But believers have the light of God's Word to warn them of coming judgment; therefore, we should be alert and living a self-controlled life.

### The problem with many Christians is that although they know that Christ will soon return, they're **still** not ready for His coming. They show no self-control at all, but their time is wasted rather than invested in light of His return.

#### Probably the best example of lack of self-control I see in the church is the amount of time Christians watch T.V.

#### I heard about a Sunday School class that tried an experiment where everyone committed themselves not to watch any T.V. for a week.

##### When the individuals reported back the following Sunday, I could hardly believe my ears! It was as if this was the most difficult assignment in their life! Some just couldn't do it. They were hooked.

##### How much time does T.V. take out of your schedule so that you are hindered in doing the things that count for eternity before Christ returns? Will you be ashamed to give Jesus an accounting of your T.V. time at the judgment seat?

#### Now I recognize that not all T.V. is bad, nor am I going to use this pulpit to pound away at my own pet peeves. There's the importance of moderation and balance.

#### And I'm not just picking on you who have a problem with T.V. We all have activities which sap our strength and make us ineffective for Christ. **Anything** can be a cause for lack of self-control.

#### For me it's an obsessiveness with organizing, as my wife well knows. I can "over-organize" to the extent that I waste my time instead of investing it in things which will outlast this life—like ministering to the lost.

#### What is it for you that occupies too much of your time so that you're lacking self-control as this passage warns?

##### T.V.? Of facebook?

##### Talking on the phone?

##### Overinvestment in a hobby such as hunting or fishing?

##### Perhaps too much time spent in a sport?

#### Once I heard a man share how much he loved to play racquetball, so he played at least once a week. The problem was that it took him two to three days each week to recover. Finally, he had to give up the game entirely because it dragged him down so that he was not able to give the Lord his best.

(So being self-controlled is the first of the three ways that we can prepare for His coming--and I think of the three that this is the real emphasis in this passage--especially self-control in relation to the use of our time. But there's the second way to prepare for Christ's return, and that is to…)

## Remember your ultimate destination (5:9-10).

### It always helps to remember the end of the story, especially when the trials hit.

#### The end result is found in Revelation 21-22 where we see a glimpse of heaven.

#### I sometimes read these chapters when I'm struggling with discouragement. It reminds me that I'm on the winning side.

#### This business of being involved in other people's lives in eternal matters is the most important priority on earth.

### Verse 10 says that God's plan is not judgment ("wrath") for believers but salvation.

#### The context concerns the Tribulation.

#### So believers will be delivered from the Tribulation.

### And verse 11 gives the result--whether we are morally awake or asleep, we will still live with Him forever.

#### The word for "sleep" here and in verse 6 is different from the one used at the end of chapter 4, referring to death.

#### Here it means spiritual lethargy and not watching for Christ's return.

#### Will Christians who are unprepared for Christ's return be taken when He comes? This verse says, "Yes." Unfortunately, they'll be ashamed in His presence.

(So how should we respond to the fact that Christ's coming is sure, even though we may not know when it will be? Verses 4-8 say to be self-controlled and verses 9-10 tell us to remember our ultimate destination is in heaven with Christ. The final exhortation appears in verse 11 where it says that we should…)

## Encourage one another (5:11).

### Rather than bicker about setting dates when Christ will come (as my friend Calvin wanted), or find fault or tear each other down, we should encourage each other.

### Evidently Paul's own encouragement in this letter was not enough. The church needed to be involved in building **one another** up.

### It's not any different for us here at this church.

#### My encouragement from the pulpit is inadequate to get the job done.

#### We all need to be involved in encouraging one another to do the will of God.

(Transition into the MI here.)

# Conclusion

### In today's passage we've seen that *the time of the Rapture will be completely unexpected so we need to be as prepared as possible, especially by living self-controlled lives* (MI).

### What does it mean **for you** to be self-controlled in light of His imminent return?

#### Perhaps you need to cut down on a habit such as T.V. and reinvest that time in people.

#### The word "self-controlled" also means "sober."

##### I think there's room here at this church for a more serious approach to what we're all here for. That means taking our church responsibilities with real seriousness to do excellent work.

##### Folks, we're in a battle and the eternal casualties and fatalities are all around us too often while we joke and fellowship and talk about ministry on the sidelines.

### The year was 1938. A certain man in New York ordered a barometer from a dealer and anxiously awaited it in the mail. By the time his patience began to wear thin it finally arrived one afternoon.

#### Excitedly, the man took the precious instrument out of its box and eyed it with wonder and appreciation.

#### Then he noticed that the needle pointed toward "hurricane." Looking outside his window he saw a bright, crisp, clear, sunny spring day.

#### This really ticked him off. After waiting so long for this important instrument, was he now going to have to send it back to the manufacturer as a defective product?

#### "Perhaps the needle is stuck," he thought, so he tapped on the glass. The needle held firm: "hurricane weather."

#### Finally, he began knocking it on the table--a very risky action for such an expensive, delicate and precise instrument. The needle wouldn't budge.

#### The day was late and the mail delivered already, so he vowed that the **following** morning he would send it back to the manufacturer.

#### In his exasperation, the next morning he left the barometer at his home on Long Island and went to work in downtown New York City. From his office he wrote a scathing letter to the manufacturer to mail with the barometer when he got home.

#### That afternoon when he got home he found his barometer gone. In fact, his **house** was gone too.

#### This was the day of the terrible 1938 Long Island hurricane that devastated most of that island of New York City.

### You see, the barometer needle wasn't defective. The **man** was--due to unbelief. And the tragedy struck still.

#### There's no question about it. Christ **will** return, and the wake of His coming will be the most terrible days the world has ever seen or ever will see.

#### Will you be taken or left behind? If you're not sure you can place your faith in Christ today.

#### If you will be taken, will you be taken as one who is asleep in spiritual lethargy or will you be awake, self-controlled in serving Him with your time remaining?

### I think one of the best ways we can be self-controlled is to have regular times of self-evaluation. That's one reason we have a regular communion service as we are celebrating today…

### Communion: Areas to evaluate…

#### Salvation

#### Bible reading

#### Prayer

#### Relationships with other believers

#### T.V. viewing

### Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

# Questions

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### Text

# Possible Applications

### Text

**Title**

***Passage***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*:

# I.

# II.

# III.

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest:

### Need:

### Subject:

### Background:

### Preview:

### Text:

(Transition into MPI here.)

# I.

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into MPII here.)

# II.

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into MPIII here.)

# III.

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into the MI here.)

# Conclusion

### (MI).

### Main Points

### Exhortation/Application



**Rick Griffith**

1986

Message of 10

**Title**

***Passage***

# Introduction

Subject with a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ blank answer in hidden text

# I. MP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

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# II. MP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

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## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

# Conclusion

### Main Idea has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

### Application question

**Thought Questions**

1. Read the passage aloud. Contrast:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **Contrast** |
| Text | Text |
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1. Text-based question

Text

Text

Text

Text

1. Application to your own Christian experience

Text

Text

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