

1Thessalonians 12-06-01a

This is 1 June 2012, 1st of June 2012. We pick up where we left off a couple of weeks ago now in 1 Thessalonians 5, we'll be resuming in verse 3, which is, don't panic, it's a little bit of a back step, but that's just so we can get a good running start through the rest of the chapter. Let's take a moment as we prepare ourselves for the study of God's word to do all of the usual things, make sure that God the Holy Spirit is free to teach us and to superintend and that we have set aside the distractions.

I was listening to myself say, clear our minds, and I got to thinking, well, I don't want to totally clear mine, or I have nothing to say. But clear it of distractions and of things that might keep us from concentrating and benefiting from the truth of God's word. Shall we pray? Father, it is such a wonderful comfort to recognize your gracious support and provision for us.

We could not attempt any part of the life to which we have been called. We could not in any way enter into your purpose and in any way reflect your glory except by your grace and through your faithful watch care over us. We thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We thank you for the power and presence and availability of your word. It isn't far above us. It isn't far beneath us.

It is as near to us as the air that we breathe. We thank you so much for the Lord Jesus Christ who gave us these gifts and placed us in the position where we stand with our feet planted on solid rock, with confident expectation of the fulfillment of your promises, of his return, of the presence and relationship with you that awaits us in the days following his return for us. We thank you for this intermediate time of opportunity to learn and to grow and to push against those things that oppose us, the wrestling that we do against principalities and powers and the forces that beset us.

We know that this strengthens us, this teaches us, gives us occasion to walk and live by faith. We pray tonight as we study this portion of your word that the truth will be clear to each one of us, that we will see its pertinence and its application, and as we do so that it will become a part of the panoply of resources and strength that you give to us in our souls to fulfill every part of our calling and be prepared for the wonderful life that lies ahead. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

1 Thessalonians chapter 5, you remember that Paul is giving the Thessalonian believers some information that he was not able to impart because of a somewhat accelerated departure during his time with them. There were things that he shared and was able to teach and then some others he couldn't quite get to. One of the things it tells us is that eschatology is probably not the first thing you teach to new believers, a lot of advanced knowledge about things to come, because as we come to faith in Christ we need to know the basic truths of our relationship with

God and to immediately launch into prophetic events and end time studies is probably not the best thing for new believers.

You'll notice that the thing that Paul had not gotten to despite the days and weeks that he spent in this community was the return of the Lord. He evidently reminds them here of what he did teach. This is our pursuit of holiness, our pursuit of our calling, our cultivation of the relationship with God through Christ that becomes ours at salvation.

This is what he has really spent the first three and a half or four chapters talking about. Now we're in chapter five and he says, now let me share with you some things that I do not want you to be ignorant of, some things that we haven't already covered. Now we're getting into future things.

Why does he do it? Even now the reason he's covering the future is because it is causing a present problem. They're worrying as members of their community die, they say, well, what does this do to the return of the Lord? Because the return of the Lord Jesus was as imminent then as it is now. They had no certainty that the Lord Jesus wouldn't be back within their lifetime just as we don't know if he'll be back in ours or not.

And as people passed away and others survived them, they said, well, what is their status? How do I know that they are going to participate in all of the blessings that are fulfillments of promise for those who have come to faith in Christ? So Paul says, I don't want you to be ignorant, brethren. I do not want you to sorrow as those who have no hope, these who have passed away, are in good shape. And he goes on to explain that in chapter four.

Now we're in chapter five where he says, but concerning the times and the seasons, and you remember in chapter one, you've got Kairos and Kronos there, and these actually have slightly different connotations. The word translated times there is a word that means things on the schedule. These are events, they're appointments, if you will.

And the word translated seasons, this is, seasons is a good translation. These are stretches of time in which certain conditions or characteristics pertain. So of times and seasons, you might think, for example, of the changes in dispensations that we observe in the word of God.

There is the initiation of the human race. There is an environment. There is a diet and a certain set of characteristics.

Then sin enters the picture. The man and woman are ejected from the garden and there is a new dispensation. And one of the marks that we've observed several times is that one of the most significant markers or one of the most visible markers of a change in dispensation is the change of diet.

And you notice that where they ate of the fruit of the trees of the garden, when they leave the garden, now cereal grains and other forms of vegetation become a part of the diet. And they're

going to grow their food and earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. There's bread.

There's no such thing as bread baked in the Garden of Eden, apparently. It was just all hanging there to be plucked. Then at the conclusion of that phase, when sin proliferates and God looks down and the iniquity in man's heart is so much a stench in God's nostrils, he decides to wipe them out, Noah emerges from the ark and there is yet another dispensation.

And there's a change in diet. Now meat is added to the diet. There's a change in justice.

There was one set of justice in the garden. There was another type of justice between the garden and the flood. You notice that Cain commits a murder and there is not capital punishment.

There's not a human court that is held. But after Noah emerges from the ark, now if a man sheds blood, by man shall his blood be shed. And humans are entrusted with the responsibility for court, holding court, dispensing justice, finding the guilty, and rendering the punishment that God commands.

It's a change. Changes throughout. So these are seasons.

We don't know how long it was that Adam and Eve were in the garden. It's difficult to know what the span was between the ejection from the garden and the flood. How long was it in precise years from the flood to the time of Moses with the giving of the law and the age of the law, where once again you have a change in diet.

Now many things are proscribed, like shellfish and the cloven-hoof-chew-the-cud criteria for determining what is and is not clean versus unclean. And these long periods of time are your seasons. The episodes where they change, these are your times.

And often those times are marked by miraculous signs of God indicating that there is a change. There will be miracles authenticating messengers, and those messengers will bring the message that the dispensation has changed. It happens again after the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ at Pentecost.

You have messengers who are authenticated by divine power. They perform miracles. They speak, and everyone understands them in his own language.

The Holy Spirit descends as though there are visible tongues of fire, and there is a new message. And by the way, a new diet. Peter sees the vision.

The sheet is let down. What God declares clean, men call unclean. It's kind of a double revelation.

Not only is the regulations of the law for diet set aside, but also those that indicated a separation between the people of God and the Gentiles are done away with. There is neither Jew nor Greek.

There is neither slave nor free.

These distinctions are dissolved in Christ, distinctions in terms of a separating. It doesn't mean that there are not still distinct roles for women and for men and for masters and for slaves and for parents and for children and for Greeks and for Jews. There are still roles to be fulfilled, but it is a great change.

So we have here in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 concerning the times and the seasons. And so times as *chronos* and seasons as *kairos*, these are two different ways of looking at history. There are events and there are periods.

So concerning events and concerning periods would be another way to translate this. He says, you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves know perfectly. And perfectly here is without flaw, without a gap, that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

This is what we talked about a couple of weeks ago. What does this mean, a thief in the night? Well, there are people who are awake and up and conscious. You've got people who work at night, who are security guards or who have a night shift or whatever.

They're not asleep and they're awake. They've got the lights on. And there are others who are asleep at night.

And thieves don't walk into a well-lit, well-crowded place and boldly walk out with stuff. Even if it's nighttime, where do they go? They go where it's dark and where people are asleep, where they can catch people unawares. And so we saw last time that depending on who you are and depending on your status, the day of the Lord either will or will not come as a thief in the night, come as a surprise that leaves in its wake loss.

That's what a thief in the night does. You wake up the next morning and are surprised to discover that someone has been there and run off with your stuff. And he says, for when they say, and this is the ubiquitous, often ill-defined they, when they, i.e. those upon whom the day of the Lord comes as a thief, when they say peace and safety, this is their belief.

This is their prediction. This is what they look around and define current circumstances to be. They say, isn't this great? And they lull themselves.

When do people feel comfortable going to sleep at night? Well, we've got our doors locked. Many people set their security alarm. We go upstairs.

Everything is battened down. We've got the dogs sleeping downstairs, ready to rip the appendages off of anybody that happens to come through a window. Everything is taken care of.

And so we say, ah, well, there is peace and there is safety. Now I can go to sleep. The old pioneers would set a watch.

Somebody would stay up with a rifle across their knees, looking out over to be sure that whatever the threat might be, whether it was hostile people or animals or anything else, you've got somebody on lookout. And the rest of people would say, ah, we've got peace and we've got safety. Now I can sleep.

The belief that there is no threat, the belief that things are going to continue as they are, creates the situation where sleep occurs. People who are nervous, people who are worried, have trouble sleeping. They say, no, everything's good.

This is what they call being lulled into a false sense of security. When they say peace and safety, therefore now I lay me down to sleep, and they don't get the rest of the prayer, then sudden destruction comes upon them. This is a couple of really interesting words here.

Sudden is eifnidios. There's an alpha privative, and the rest of the word has the idea of being aware and alert, and then you've got the alpha privative. So it is not so much sudden in the sense of this lightning hit, wow, wasn't that sudden, but of unexpected.

And it happens before you realize. My favorite example of this, which I've told you before, is when I was making my brief foray into the world of crew, and you're with seven other guys pulling big long oars in a skinny little boat with a coxswain steering the thing, and the coach is beside in a motorboat with a bullhorn, coaching, doing whatever he does, and you're rowing and the water's a little bit choppy, and I was doing this one day, and he said, okay, take it up, and so we went up into the mid-30s, he said, take it up some more, and so we went up into the high 30s in terms of a stroke rate, how many strokes per minute, and this is approaching two strokes per second when you get to a 30-something stroke, isn't that, am I right? Is that what 30 is? One stroke every two seconds. Yeah, one stroke every, isn't that what I said? One stroke every two seconds.

And so when he starts saying row really fast, well, you have to be good, you can't be sloppy, your form has to be immaculate because if not, this great long stick with a blade on the end will catch the water the wrong way, and it acts like a lever, the long end has got the leverage, the little short end has got me hanging on it, and when it, what's what they call catching a crab, you know, the mythical crab that reached up and maliciously grabbed your oar, one minute you're sliding smoothly back and forth, you know, trying to pull your weight plus your eighth of the boat, and the next minute I was, I mean the next instantaneous twinkle of an eye, I was underwater by a couple of feet, freezing cold Severn River water having flown in from the North Atlantic through the Chesapeake, and there was no intervening time. One moment I was sliding smoothly doing my strokes, just concentrating, and the next minute, the next twinkle, not a minute, not a second, not a fraction of a second, it's instantaneous. One to the other, I'm underwater, and the boat stops, and your oar is dragging like an anchor, and the coach is saying, go and drag your wet carcass out, but it's that quick and completely unforeseen.

You don't know it's going to happen until after it has happened. That's what this word means. So

sudden isn't really the best translation.

It's more unawares. You don't know about it until after it has happened. You totally did not see it coming, completely unexpected.

And this is illustrated by as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And notice, you know, you say, well, the pregnant woman ought to be expecting labor pains, right? If you're pregnant, you would say, well, at some point, I'm going to go into labor. Well, the other connotation, and the reason this is a real unusual word in the Greek New Testament is not only does it mean unawares and overtakes you when you just weren't prepared, it also means inescapable.

This is that type of thing, but it is inescapable. I recently had some dealings with a good old fashioned mousetrap. Well, why do those things work? Not only does the mouse not know that it's a trap, but it happens so fast that it is inescapable.

It's not like the little catch flips, and he says, oh, I think this trap is, let me just back up and get it. He has no time. That's what *afnidios* means.

Not only is it unknown and unexpected and unforeseen, it is inescapable. And the inescapable part of the word is what is being illustrated by the pregnant woman. Every pregnant woman knows and actually kind of hopes that she gets to labor at some point.

You don't want to walk around the rest of your life pregnant. Well, how long have you been pregnant? 19 years. I mean, nobody would want to do that.

By the ninth month, you're saying, oh, Lord, when am I going to go into labor? Please, God, let's have this baby. And so in what sense would that be sudden or unexpected? Well, that's not what this is illustrating. It's the second part of the word.

When labor pains hit a woman, the woman can't say, you know, I had no idea when I was getting pregnant that it was going to hurt like this. So the deal's off. I'm just going to shrink back down.

The baby's going to just go disappear, and we're just not going to do this baby thing. In the ancient world, when labor pains hit, you're committed. You were committed nine months ago, and now that they come, it's inescapable.

When your labor starts, you know, they didn't have epidurals. They didn't have C-sections. When the labor pains start, you're in for it.

You're going to go through the process, and Lord willing, and all goes well, a baby will emerge some hours later. But when that first pang hits, it's a process, and it is inescapable. So unforeseen, inescapable.

That's the destruction. Now, what's the word for destruction? A lot of you, because I have spent a

much time and effort on Apollumi and Apollia. Remember Judas, the son of perdition? Apollia.

And we've talked about perdition and what it means. And you think, well, sudden destruction. This is probably Apollia.

Well, it's not. This word is different. This is Olethros.

O-L-E-T-H-R-O-S. Olethros. And it's not like ole.

It's not a good thing. Olethros. Now, the reason I'm going to belabor the Greek a little bit here is, what was the first word I gave you? The first noun for destruction and perdition? Apollia, right? Well, let's break that down.

The first two syllables are what? Apa. Greek preposition, apa. What does it mean? From.

Sometimes away from. There's an idea of separation there. It doesn't mean out from, but it means from in the sense of, you know, Apologia.

You have an apology, which is a defense, actually, of a thing. And so you're getting your defense from these words. Your words distance you from an issue or whatever.

Well, apa, in its root, it means from. So you've got apa and then laia. Well, as it turns out, look at this word.

You have Olethros. Well, just look at the first part, ole. Well, apole.

The root of these two words is the same. The loss, the destruction, the perdition is the O-L-E, central core of the word. So apolia, if they put that intensifying preposition on the front, it means to be destroyed from or to be ruined from or to lose from.

There is an intrinsic, inherent idea that this loss is loss with a view to it being gone. And again, I don't have time to go into a detailed word study, but if you get your strong's out sometimes and look at where apolia and apolumi are used frequently, but in all of these cases, when Judas is the son of perdition, the son of apolia, who is the one disciple that got separated from the disciples? His ruin is not just financial ruin. It's not just a soul ruin.

His ruin separates him from that opportunity and that group and that Lord Jesus Christ. So this is a separating, a distancing kind of ruin. If you apolumi your money, well, your money is gone never to return.

Apolia is used of the ointment in the alabaster flask that was broken. And they say, why did she waste that perfume? It could have been sold and money given to the poor. Well, it's been poured out.

You can't put the toothpaste back in the tube. You can't put the perfume back in the broken

alabaster box. It has, they say wasted, but it's the idea.

Well, it's been, it's gone and we can't get it back. We can't scrape it up off the floor and sell it to give to the poor. We can't scrape it up off of Jesus' feet.

It's gone away. It is, that's *apolia*. Well, here we have *ole* and then *thras*.

And in Greek, and this is a little bit of a stretch, but in Greek, the passive is indicated by a *theta*. When you're looking at a passive use of a verb and so on, there will be a *theta* in it. And that changes an active verb to a passive verb.

And you've got a *theta* here. And this is ruin that comes from the outside. You are ruined by something else.

And so the emphasis is different. Instead of looking at it from the standpoint of, well, this is going away and not coming back. These people who are going to be in the darkness, which is outside, their perdition, their loss, they are separated from rewards and blessings.

They are separated from the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are separated from the light. They are separated from opportunity and potential.

That ruin is gone, never to come back. This is ruin with a different emphasis. This *ole thras* is sudden and inescapable, right? And it is something that happens to them.

There is an element of fate, not in the sense of abstract fate, but it's ordained. It is going to happen. It's bigger than us.

The reason you can't escape it is that this is from God. It is ordained of God. And the reason it is inescapable, this passive idea is there's nothing you can do about it.

Not only you think, well, if I just known I could escape it. Well, if you're in this category, even if somebody had said, hey, get out of Dodge, destruction is coming. No, that *theta*, this is destruction that God has assured to those who reject his son, who reject his plan and purpose.

It is an assured inescapable and overtaking type of ruin. So it is very, there's such an air of finality about *ole thras*. It's not looking at what it does to you in terms of separation.

It's looking at its complete fatedness, ordainedness, inescapability in the sense of it's just way too big. This is the tsunami and you're at the coast and your car's out of gas. I mean, you're just, all you can do is stand on the beach and watch it come in type of thing.

So it's very much the opposite of the peace and safety that they have declared. And there are two flavors of this *ole thras*. When they say peace and safety, they are those upon whom the day of the Lord comes unaware.

Now there can be unbelievers upon whom it's going to come. And this is the slamming shut of the arc door. It's going to be seven more days before the flood comes.

But the door is shut, right? And there's a sense in which there's seven more years of history before the final judgment. But these people who are unbelievers, their fate is sealed already at that point. They're as clueless seven years later as they were seven years earlier, or they would have come to faith in Christ and gone up in the rapture.

So there is that. But you, brethren, are not in darkness. This is everyone who is in darkness.

And there's another sort of a chiastic idea here. Do you remember when Zacharias finally has his tongue loose, the father of John the Baptist, and he gives out with this wonderful prophecy and prophetic description of what his son is going to do as the forerunner. But there is the quotation from the Old Testament, those sitting in darkness have seen a great light.

Well, what if you're sitting in the darkness and the light comes on and you shut your eyes or you turn away? Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. The birth of the Lord Jesus Christ was light. Those sitting in darkness have seen a great light.

And there are some people who are drawn by the light, who come to the light, who want to live in the light, who are transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the son of his love, which is light because God is light and in him is no darkness at all. And there are those who choose the opposite. Well, this is darkness.

You brethren, you brethren. What makes them brethren? What makes them Adelphoi? We are brothers and sisters in Christ. Your new translations now, every time there's Adelphoi, they will translate it brothers and sisters.

I think even the NET Bible does this. And they have a big long note justifying saying, well, we just want to be sure people understand that the sisters are in there. Well, I've never really had a problem understanding that, but be that as it may.

Adelphoi, these are family members in Christ, right? You brethren. Now, you have a question. Well, what if you're saved, but you're really, really backslidden, reprobate? No count, no good, no faith, no obedience.

You got saved and then just, you know, you were in Sunday school and said, oh, Jesus, come into my heart. And you were genuinely saved, but then you never did a thing with it. You grew up and you're just a complete rascal.

Well, here's how to answer that question. Are you or are you not a brother? Can you lose your brotherhood? Can you be such a bad brother that, well, you're not a brother? Can you be such a bad child that you just didn't even come from your parents anymore? That relationship, that birth

relationship to parents and to brothers is permanent. Like it or not, repudiated all you want, people, oh, you are dead to me.

Sorry. Legally speaking, physically speaking, the physics of the equation, you are a son, you are a brother. It is an irreversible, one-time, go-forward, zener diode, back-check valve.

It only goes one way. You are now born into a family from which you cannot be unborn. Nicodemus, well, can I crawl back on my mother and be born a second time? No, birth is a one-time deal.

And when you're born, you're born. If you're going to be born again, it's a new kind of birth that is also just like physical birth, not reversible. In the same way that this destruction is inescapable, so is the new birth.

It's inescapable. Once you are newly born, once you are born in Christ, once you're regenerate, once you are adelphoi, once you are huioi, son of God, that is it. This isn't sort of a contract.

Party of the first part agrees that the party of the second part will be a son so long as party of the second part agrees to the contractual obligations specified by party of the first part. None of that. God could have easily used contract language, and he doesn't.

It's a birth. So you, brethren, are not in the darkness. How many believers does that include? Good, bad, ugly, dead, undead, past, present, future.

If you are a believer, if you are brethren, by the way, this is New Testament believer. Old Testament saints are not called brothers. We are brothers in Christ.

We have a different standing. New covenant founded on new and better promises, part of which is we are brethren. So you, brethren, are not in darkness.

No brother is in darkness, or should be, that that day should overtake you as a thief. The most mindless, disobedient, reprobate, in-line-for-judgment believer isn't going to be here for the dark day. You're not in darkness.

Now, the rapture may overtake you as a thief, but this day of judgment and loss that's going to happen, i.e., the tribulation, cannot overtake a brother. Cannot overtake an adelphos, because there are no adelphoi here. The day of the rapture can well overtake you as a thief, and you may have a different kind of loss at the judgment seat of Christ.

But this loss, this judgment, this inescapable thing like birth pangs for a pregnant woman doesn't come upon you because you're not in this darkness. You're not in the tribulational darkness. You're not in the antichrist, man of sin darkness.

You're not in darkness so that this day, now there may be another day that overtakes you as a

thief, rapture day, but this day does not overtake you as a thief. You are how many? What does it say? Verse 5. Most of you are sons of light. A goodly number of you, actually only a small percentage of you, what does it say? You are all sons of light and sons of the day.

Notice sons. It doesn't say you are all walking in the light. It doesn't say you are all living in the day.

It doesn't say you are all abiding in the vine and bearing much fruit. What is the language he uses? It is the irreversible relationship language of huioi, huioi, you are sons. Irreversible, one time, one way, good to go from then on, relationship with God.

You are all, all you brethren are sons of light and sons of the day. And that day will dawn. Now the day may dawn and find you naked.

The day may dawn and find you standing at the judgment seat of Christ watching a flash fire of wood, hay and stubble, but that is a different day. This day of judgment, this day of tribulation on the earth does not overtake any church age believer like a thief because all church age believers are sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night.

We are not of the darkness. Who is of the night and of the darkness? Initially, everybody that is left after we leave is an unbeliever. There will be those who will very quickly convert and they will become the 144,000 servants, but they are going to be Old Testament saints.

The Old Testament clock starts ticking and the last week of Daniel, the 70th week of Daniel will pertain. Those people are of that darkness. Therefore, now, therefore, let us blow it all off and not to worry because we are all sons of light and sons of the day.

Therefore, let us relax. Let us kick back. Let us pour a cold one.

Let's heist a few. Let's toast. What does it say? In the light of this truth, in the light of this irreversible status, let us not sleep.

You can be a son of the light and a son of the day and sleep during the day, and this is traditionally viewed as laziness, isn't it? When the sun is up, we should be up. When it's daytime, that's the workday, right? And you are a slothful, indigent, insensitive, irresponsible person if it's light and it's day and you're sleeping. Paul says we're sons of the light, sons of the day.

Therefore, let us not sleep. Don't be a sloth. Don't be a layabout, a bum, an indigent, non-working, non-caring, and most of the people who wind up sleeping in the day, what have they been doing the night before? Carousing.

They're hungover. They're, you know, all four tires blown out mentally. Let us not sleep as others do.

Are there sons of the light and sons of the day who sleep? Yes, just like the unbelievers. They are indistinguishable. Let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch Gregorio and be sober.

Sobriety in Scripture is self-control. Let us watch. Let us exercise self-discipline, self-control.

We've got a to-do list. Let's get up and to-do it. Let's be accountable and responsible and fulfill those things that God has given us the means, the motive, and the opportunity to do.

Well, we'll pause here and take our break and pick up afterward in verse 7.