

1Thessalonians 12-06-01b

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, Paul says, You are all sons of light and sons of the day, brethren. And this is a categorical statement about church age believers. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

Now, there is a kind of darkness, as we've mentioned, just like with eschatos and protos and other types of terms. What is the context? What is the context of the word all? When he says you are all sons of light, well, what if there's an unbeliever sitting in there listening to the sound of this letter being read? Well, he's not in that all, because all is circumscribed by adelphoi, brethren. You, brethren, are all sons.

Same thing here. We are not of the night nor of the darkness. Now, there are believers who are of the night and of the darkness, but it is a different night and a different darkness.

This is specifically that which follows what he has just described in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. When the Lord himself descends from heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel, the trumpet of God, the dead in Christ rise first, we, brethren, who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Comfort one another with these words, but I don't need to tell you about events and periods of time, because you know perfectly well that the day of the Lord, which is the day that begins at the rapture, comes like a thief, and those who are caught in the darkness, it is inevitable. It is going to be a time of loss.

So, we see the context here. What night and darkness is he speaking of? It is the night and darkness that follows the removal of the reflected light of God when the church leaves, and the Holy Spirit leaves with it. At least in the sense of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Spirit that pervades believers and provides an amelioration and a dampening effect on sin and evil.

Paul talks about when the man of sin is revealed, and you know what it is that keeps him from appearing, and what it is that allows him to appear, and so on. So, because we are not of the night nor of the darkness, and this is the tribulational night and tribulational darkness, which is a judgment on mankind and on evil in the world, which is a judgment that includes the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age, this cataclysmic judgment, which really kicks into high gear halfway through that final week, that final three and a half years, that judgment is going to purge and clear the way for the millennial reign of Christ, the Davidic king sitting on the throne in Jerusalem, the restoration of an idyllic environment with perfect justice and great opportunity. So, you are sons of light and sons of the day.

We are not of the night nor of the darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep. Let us not sleep as others, but let us watch and be sober.

The word for sober here is nepho, N-E-P-H-O. And this is to be free from impulsiveness, to be free from rash jumping into things, ill-considered action. Nepho means you are balanced.

You are sober in the sense of judicious. You think, you look before you leap, you consider. If you ever, as I have been doing now for many weeks, go through a detailed biography of George Washington, this was one of his outstanding characteristics.

It was seen to be a flaw when he was a general, the commanding general of the Revolutionary Army. They said, well, he doesn't adapt to the changing conditions of the battlefield because he's very deliberate. He wants to gather all the information and he was criticized for being indecisive.

Well, he wasn't indecisive, but he wasn't someone who intuitively knows what's going on and makes a snap call. He wanted information. He wanted to chew on it.

He wanted to weigh it and digest it. And when he became president, these same characteristics that in some cases were thought to be flaws in a general on the battlefield ended up being great assets as a president because plans could stew and mature and be thought out and be refined before they were put into practice. And so many of the innovations and the creations that he is responsible for in the executive branch of our government were the fruit of this careful deliberation and judicious proceeding from a balanced, thoughtful point of view.

This is what NAFO means. Let us be judicious. Many of the accidents that occur are people acting in haste, acting without thought, acting impulsively, acting emotionally, in some cases acting under the influence of something.

And he says, don't be that way. Let us be watchful and be sober. And notice how often these two come together.

As I mentioned, we did a study on this. Watch and pray. Watch and be sober.

Why are these two together? Well, if you are going to be thoughtful and judicious, you do need the information. How do you get the information? Pay attention. Watch.

He doesn't just say be sober, just kind of be a plodding, middle-of-the-road person. Watch, be aware. Your best decisions are made when you get the most information.

This is one of your classic problem-solving techniques in any walk of life, in any area of life. If you're facing a decision, if you're uncertain, it's not clear what course to take, whether or not to do a thing, the best antidote is more information. If you're having trouble making a decision, get more information.

Usually, additional information that is accurate, that is balanced, that is thoughtfully considered enables us to resolve. And we pick that better way. There is good, better, and best.

The way to get to best is with all of the facts. Weigh them, balance them. This is what NAFO means.

Verse 7, For those who sleep, sleep at night. Why do we sleep at night? Well, you can't get as much information at night. You can't see as well.

The sun is down. We like to operate where we can see. And unless you're nocturnal, which can happen, certain animals are nocturnal, but human beings, generally, our senses and our things work best.

We've got a circadian rhythm in our system, and we sleep at night, and we work during the day. This is when our senses function the best. And we rest at night.

Sleeping at night is a good thing. Nothing wrong with it. But he says, look, those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.

Now, if you're getting drunk at night, what are you not doing at night? Sleeping. He's not saying those who sleep, sleep at night. He's not lumping them in with the drunks.

He says, look, there's a time to sleep, and there's a time to be awake. Drunks don't know when to go to sleep. And they're up imbibing and abusing alcohol when they should be sleeping, so that when daytime comes, instead of sleeping in the day, they would be alert, awake, and ready to be a son of the day.

But they've got their Kronos and Kairos mixed up, don't they? Their events and their periods are just backwards. When they ought to be sleeping, they're awake. When they ought to be awake, they're asleep.

When they ought to be sober and judicious and temperate and well-informed, they're bibulous and schnockered. So, let us, verse 8, who are of the day, be napho, be sober. He uses the word again.

And this is a present active subjunctive. Subjunctive is the mood of potential. And when you say, let us be this, it means you might be or you might not be.

The potential is there. Let us do this. He doesn't say, congratulations, you are all napho.

He gives an exhortation. Let us be judicious, sober, well-informed, self-controlled, careful about what we do. But it's a subjunctive.

Maybe you will, maybe you won't. It's optional. Now, there is no option on being a son of the day.

And on rising at the return of the Lord. That's not optional. There's no subjunctive mood involved in that.

This is a mood of potential. We can either fulfill that potential or we can miss it. Let us be sober.

Putting on. And this word, putting on, is from enduo. We talk about endu.

You endu a thing. And it literally means to be clothed with. To be characterized by.

You look at somebody and they're in uniform. You look at somebody and they're in a certain kind of clothing. Putting on the breastplate of faith.

Now, if I tell you, if I give you a cohortative, an exhortation here, I give you a subjunctive mood and I say, let us have faith. Class dismissed. Go out.

Have some faith. How would you do this? What is required to be a person of faith? It basically means believe, right? Believe. Old Mulder in the X-Files had a thing, you know, they're out there.

I believe or some such thing. Well, believe what? You believe in space aliens. You believe in extraterrestrials.

You believe in, you know, spooks, you believe in magic. What do you, what do you believe when he says, put on the breastplate of faith? How do you actually do that? If you're going to go out tonight, this is Friday night, 1st of June, 2012. You're going to leave here and you can say, you know, I saw that in the scripture.

Paul, the apostle speaking on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ and God, the father in the power and presence of God, the Holy Spirit has said, let us put on the breastplate of faith. I'm going to put that thing on. I'm going to get me a breastplate of faith.

I'm going to strap it on. Do you want to do this or not? Do you want to end up tomorrow, Saturday, walking around with your breastplate of faith or not? You do, right? Everybody. Yes, we do this.

Yes, we want this breastplate of faith. The apostle Paul speaking on behalf of God says, let's put on this breastplate of faith. We say, amen, brother, I'm going to do it.

How are you going to do that? Where is the thing? I promise you, when you go home and look in the closet, there's no breastplate of faith hanging in there. It's not there. And you just told me you're going to do this, right? Yes, absolutely.

I'm going to strap on the breastplate of faith. Well, how are you going to do it? Everybody get out a piece of paper, write down for me, turn it in. No, just kidding.

But how are you going to do it? If we say we're going to do a thing, we ought to have some notion of how we're going to do it, right? Please clean my house. Okay, fine. I'll clean your house.

How? With what? How dirty is your house? Well, breastplate of faith. We've got to know how to do it, right? How do you put on the breastplate of faith? He has just told us in this context, has he not? Let us be awake. Let us be sober.

Let us watch. When you watch, what happens? When your eyes are open and you're looking around, observing, what do you get? Information. Everybody wants information.

This is why everybody's got internet on their phone. I want information. I want a map.

I want to know where the restaurant is. I want to know what Justin Bieber did last week or whatever it may be. People want information, right? What did the economy do? How many jobs did not get created short of the 125,000? It was supposed to sustain our economy and we only got 69,000 information, right? How did I get that information off the internet, off the TV screen, outside the elevators at my building? Why did I see that information? Because my eyes were open and I was walking around in daylight, right? That's information.

Now, do I believe that our economy is in trouble? Do I believe that the jobless rate is insanely and destructively and catastrophically high? Yes, I believe it. Well, faith is believing propositional truths. Why do I say propositional? Because it's not the truth that there's light emitted from the sun.

It's not the truth that the acceleration rate of gravity is 9.8 meters per second per second. It's not some abstract, you know, all truth is God's truth. No, propositional truth of scripture is this is what God has said.

This is who God is. This is what God is doing and what God expects us to do. This is God's provision.

This is God's work in the earth. This is the Lord Jesus Christ. These are things in which we believe.

We believe that God created the heaven and the earth. We believe that Jesus came and paid the penalty for our sins. We believe that he is coming back with a shout, the voice of the archangel and the Trump of God, and that we will rise and the dead will rise first and we will join them in the air.

We believe this. We believe that the elements are going to melt with a fervent heat and that there is a new super hyper universe in which we will dwell where righteousness is at home. These are observations.

These are propositional truths. Now, how do we strap on the breastplate of faith? Because I believe these things are true, I function a certain way in the day. I am not worried about taking extraordinary measures to survive some economic disaster.

Now, I might take some steps. I might try to be prudent. I might try to be sober.

I might try to be watchful and be wise in the stewardship of whatever God has put under my care, but it all belongs to God. It belonged to somebody else before I got here. It will belong to

somebody else after I leave.

The house I'm in now, other people lived in. When I'm out of that house, somebody else is going to live in it unless it burns down. All of my cars, somebody else owned them before I did.

Every single one of them. And if they last long enough, somebody else will have them after I quit driving them or the junk man will be parting them out. But we're temporary stewards of what we have.

This is a biblical principle. Everything is going to melt. What kind of people ought you to be recognizing that all of these material things are passing away? Well, my breastplate, which protects my heart, protects the seat of my emotions and the seat of my motivation and my will, which is the heart, is shielded from attack and from intrusion by the knowledge and belief in that knowledge of these aspects of the plan and purpose of God.

So how are you going to strap on the breastplate of faith? The rest of today, whatever's left of today, tomorrow, the next day, the next, as we encounter circumstances and situations, what are we going to do? This is not going to upset me. This is not going to deflect me. This is not going to distract me.

This is not going to make me live like any run-of-the-mill common unbeliever. Why? I am shielded from common, mundane, earthbound, short-sighted, myopic thinking by the truth of God in which I believe. And it shields me.

It protects me. It enables me to have a heart for God. But only if I put it on.

Only if I stop and think. I have to watch. I have to be sober.

If I'm not watchful... Have you ever seen a drunk trying to put something on? If you've ever been in the service, you've seen a drunk trying to put on his jacket. I mean, it's inevitable. At least it was when I was on active duty in the Marine Corps.

Guys go somewhere, happy hour, they get schlocked and they're trying to find their gear to get back out. It's wrong side out. It's upside down.

It's buttoned crooked, whether it's civilian clothes or whatever. You're not sober. You're not watchful.

You're not aware. You're not alert. We need to be these things in order to put on the breastplate of faith.

So there is a way. Be watchful. What do we watch? Where do we get our facts? It's the Word of God.

It is the truth of the Word of God. This is why you're here in Bible class. So let us, who are of the

day, be naïve, be self-controlled, be balanced, be aware, putting on the breastplate of faith and love.

These are linked. Why? Because we are a brotherhood. We are a family.

And we learn these things together. We share these things together. We build one another up.

I might forget something I've learned. I might forget an aspect that bears on this, that God is in His heaven and all these things work together for good. Maybe I've been bowled over by something, but there's a one another there.

There's another believer. And our fellowship is up-building. Our love and our care for one another is encouraging and sustaining and preserving.

We are together because God has put us together. God didn't make the Christian life a solo flight. We're not Lindbergh going across the Atlantic.

We're not Amelia Earhart crashing in some unknown, God-forsaken place. We're together. And we put on the breastplate of faith, and it's a phalanx.

Remember that shield idea when we were talking about the armor of God and how each man's shield overlaps and protects the man next to him? And that enables you to swing your sword. And you can swing your sword and go on the attack because the guy next to you is helping out with his shield. Got the shield on the left.

Got the sword in the right. And because there is a phalanx, you're protected and you're able to advance. And that's why the breastplate of faith and love are intermingled, because we do this together.

And as a helmet, consistently in Scripture, the helmet is the hope of salvation. The breastplate protects your heart. The heart and your abdomen, that's where your reins are, your emotions.

That's where your heart is, the seat of your motivation and your direction and your commitment. Helmet protects your head, right? What goes on in your head? Well, let me ask you this. Are your eyes in your chest or in your head? Where do you do your watching? Where do you do your analysis of what you see? The intellectual understanding takes place in the head.

The faith comes out of the heart. We've got a filter there. We say, well, I see it, but I don't believe it.

I think that's Photoshop. I don't think there were 15 Obamas in the Situation Room when Osama bin Laden or the helicopter crash or whatever. People have taken that Situation Room photo and put President Obama's face on everybody.

Well, I don't believe that. My head tells me that's Photoshop, right? So it never goes down to my heart for any sort of faith or action or commitment or breastplate. But when we understand the teaching of the Word of God, we send it down to the heart and we say, all right, I think this is true.

What are you going to do with it? Am I going to act on it? Smokers say, yeah, I read the pack, Surgeon General, hazardous to your health, throat cancer. They've got these scary commercials now where all kinds of disfigured people are staggering around saying, yeah, I got this from smoke and smoking. Well, that's the head.

The head says, yeah, I don't doubt it. I don't think that's fake. That's probably true.

Send it down to the heart. The heart says, give me another pack. Give me another puff.

Give me another carton. I don't care what your head says. Smoke, smoke, smoke.

The heart just denies it. Listen, in the postmodern world, logic happens in the head, but it doesn't affect the heart. Oh, yes, I know that unsafe sex is a hugely stupid idea, but you know what? I just don't care.

I know that there are facts about this, that, and the other. I just don't care. It's incomprehensible to people in my generation, and most of you, I'm sure, that absolute incontrovertible logic built on facts, a solid foundation that is absolutely undeniable, irrefutable, is made and people say, well, yeah, you got me there, but you know what? I'm going over here anyway.

It's not persuasive. Persuasion takes place in the heart. You can even have an intellectual assent to a thing that is not faith.

It doesn't compel. It doesn't motivate. It doesn't change behavior.

Paul says, put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation, the hope of deliverance. This is what keeps our eyes looking at the right things. This is what keeps our head analyzing the right things so that we pass the right stuff down to our heart for faith.

For God did not appoint us to wrath. Now, what's the helmet made of? Same stuff the breastplate's made of. An impenetrable protective surface, right? And now he gives us some helmet material.

We've got the hope of deliverance for our helmet, and then he says, you know what this is made of? You know what one component of this is? God did not appoint us to wrath. This dark day, this night that descends after the rapture is the day of wrath. Day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds.

It's in Scripture. And Paul says, you know what? God has not appointed us to wrath. It's a fact.

Make a helmet out of it. Make a breastplate out of it. You don't have to worry about, oh, I think we might be in the tribulation.

I wonder if I'm going to take the mark of the beast. I wonder if I need to flee to the hills. You start going all nuts.

This is a great helmet. It is constructed of the doctrines and principles and promises of the Word of God. It's not a tinfoil hat.

It is a helmet of deliverance, and this is one of its components. We're not appointed to wrath. We are appointed to deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ.

There never was a more consistent, faithful, delivering human being in the universe than the Lord Jesus. And that's what our deliverance is tied to. Was the Lord Jesus found faithful? Was He obedient unto death, even the death of the cross? Has He been exalted by God above every name that is named? Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.

Why? Because He was absolutely reliable. And that's the basis and the anchor and the foundation of our deliverance. So don't let people throw you, saying, you know, it's actually a mid-trib rapture.

It's actually a post-trib rapture. You're going to have to think about the mark and think about the fleeing and the destruction and a third of the earth and the moon turning to blood. No.

God has not appointed us to wrath. Keep your hat on. Keep your helmet on.

God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us. Death is not an issue for us because in the same way that Jesus took our sin, Jesus took our death. He died for us so that we don't die.

What's our memory verse in John 11? I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And the one who lives and believes in me shall never die.

Never die. You shut your eyes. You open your eyes.

Here's the Lord in the air. Death. We miss it.

We miss out on death. He died for us so that whether we wake or sleep, we live together with him. While we're alive in this earth, we are sons of the light and sons of the day and we live for him.

If we sleep, no sooner do we sleep than we wake and we're with him and we're in the light and we're in the day. It doesn't say the Lord is going to come for us in darkness and we're going to rise up through the air and we can't see the dead in Christ rising first, and we can't see the

archangel, we can't see the Lord Jesus. It's just an impenetrable darkness.

Even people that have near-death experiences, what do they see? It's light. Move to the light. Come to the light.

The future for us is light, not dark. Whether we wake or sleep, whether we are alive or dead, and by the way, whether we wake or sleep as believers, the most reprobate believer who's asleep in the day and awake in the night reveling and getting drunk is still going to live together with him. Eternal security of the believer.

You cannot lose your salvation. Another passage that teaches it. And we live together with him.

Not just live, not sequestered on a leper island someplace. Well, you can live, but no, we live together with him. The worst reprobate on the outskirts of the body of Christ is still with him, is still part of that family.

Now, within that, there is going to be the first and there's going to be the last, just as there will be in Israel. Jesus said, the last will be first, the first will be last. But hey, if you're last, you're still in.

The anchorman in the graduating class of any military academy still graduates. He's last. There's the guy that graduates number one.

Gets all sorts of privileges and benefits and attention and so on. And then you've got the last guy that just squeaks by. The guy below him didn't make it, but he is in the graduating class.

He's got a diploma. He's got a commission. He goes on just like everybody else.

There is variation. There are opportunities within that, but you're all in Christ. So this brings us now to verse 12, where Paul is having laid this foundation, having reviewed these things that are part of that breastplate that you and I are going to put on, right? Do you know now how to put on this breastplate? Paul says, put it on.

You say, amen, brother. I'm going to put it on. We know how to do this, right? How is it? Just think about tomorrow.

We ought to go ahead and do it tonight. Don't waste any time. But think about tomorrow.

What's on the schedule for tomorrow morning? It's a Saturday. Well, let's see. Got a lawn to mow.

Got some laundry to do. Got some home maintenance. Got some errands to run.

Got some people to see and places to go and things to do, right? Well, can I put on the breastplate in the course of doing those? Can I find a way to invest each and every one of those activities with a purpose in Christ? If I'm going to talk to somebody, let me be a reflection of Christ. I don't have to be quoting chapter and verse, but should my conversation be seasoned

with salt? Should I be balanced? Should I be relaxed? Should I be thinking of others instead of myself? Should I be asking questions instead of running on about myself endlessly? Should I find a way to express a concern, looking out not only for my own interests, but also for the interests of others? Because that's a truth of the Word of God. It's a part of my breastplate.

It will protect my heart from selfishness and self-centeredness and arrogance and being a boor and a committer of attitude sins. I can be objective instead of subjective. If I'm going to mow the lawn, if I'm going to do some laundry, if I'm going to wash the car, if I'm going to do some maintenance around the house, whatever it is I'm going to do, can I do it as under the Lord? If this was the house that belonged to the Lord Jesus, how diligent would I be? How careful would I be? How thoughtful would I be as I did these tasks? Well, it does belong to the Lord, right? What do you have that you did not receive? It's a stewardship.

It is required that a man be found faithful. Do it as under the Lord and not unto men. Can I find a way to do that? That's my breastplate.

That's my helmet. I'm thinking ahead. I'm looking to when the Lord Jesus returns and says, well done.

I entrusted you with my household and you were faithful. You didn't beat your fellow servants. You didn't eat all the food out of the pantry yourself.

You thought about my return. You thought about my love for my servants and you treated them as I would treat them. You did a stewardship the way I would do it.

We can do that in every single mundane task of the day. That's putting on the breastplate. Now listen, tomorrow, everything that we do unthinkingly, anything that we do just because we've always done it, anything we do just out of habit and routine and we're not thinking about the Lord Jesus and thinking about our identity and our stewardship and our opportunity in Him, that strap is coming loose.

That breastplate is slipping. That helmet is falling off. Oh, I'm a little sweaty.

I'm just going to take that off and wipe my brow. We don't put it back on. We're vulnerable.

This is where the principalities and powers against which we wrestle will take advantage. They're just waiting for an opening. If you ever watch boxing, that boxer, if he's smart and if he's skilled, all he's doing is waiting for you to drop your guard once.

One good solid right cross and now your knees are wobbly and you're going down. That's all the enemy needs is a gap in the armor in attention to its arrangement. So we don't want to do that.

Let's be sober. Let's be watchful. Let's have on our breastplate and our helmet and live our lives as under the Lord.

That is the exhortation. That makes us truly a son of the day, a son of promise. This is how we inherit.

This is how we're ready when the Lord Jesus returns. Well, this brings us to verse 12 where we'll pick up next week, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of the word and how clearly and elegantly you have described for us our opportunity, the provision that you've made for us, the example that you have set for us, the challenge that you have given us, the calling that you have issued to us.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will enliven these truths, bring them to our mind, make us conscious of them minute by minute as we live the life that remains to us in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ. In that day and in this time of opportunity, we will redeem the time even though the days are evil and be ready both now and in the future to reflect your glory and the glory of our Savior. We pray it in his name.

Amen.