

1 Thessalonians 5:4-11

Light vs Dark - 1

1

Introduction

The world is filled with all sorts of people and cultures, yet they can be divided into two distinct groups. There are believers and unbelievers; the redeemed and the unredeemed; the saved and the lost; those in God's kingdom of light and those in the kingdom of darkness. These two groups are easily recognized by the values, beliefs, and behavior. These are manifested in how they live their lives.

In this passage Paul contrasts night people (unbelievers) with day people (believers). Night people are associated with darkness, sleep, and drunkenness; day people with light, alertness, and soberness.

2

Introduction

Paul reassured the Thessalonians that they would not face God's wrath. His use of the pronouns "they" and "them" distinguishes the Thessalonians from the unbelievers who will experience God's wrath.

Paul now presents a series of contrasts between night people and day people. He also gives implications for each concerning the Day of the Lord. Paul made it plain that the Thessalonians' fears that they were already in the Day of the Lord were groundless. Believers are light people and will not experience the darkness of the Day of the Lord.

Three distinctive characteristics set day people (believers) apart from night people (unbelievers): their nature, behavior, and destiny.

3

1 Thessalonians 5:4-11

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸ But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. ¹¹ Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

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The Believer's Nature

1 Thessalonians 5:4-5

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Verse 3 states, "For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman.

And they shall not escape."

The phrase but you introduces a contrast with verse 3, where Paul used the pronouns "they" and "them" to refer to unbelievers who will not escape the Day of the Lord. The term brethren further emphasizes Paul's point. As God's children, the Thessalonians would not experience the Day of the Lord, because unlike unbelievers, believers are not in darkness; they possess an entirely different nature. They do not belong to the night and are not part of Satan's evil kingdom.

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Darkness is a term that is often used to refer to the intellectual and moral darkness of those living outside of Christ. They live in intellectual darkness for they do not know the truth. They live in moral darkness for they are slaves to their flesh.

John 3:19-20

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

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But believers are not lost in this darkness of ignorance, sin, and rebellion. "I am the Light of the world," Jesus said; "He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12). In the Sermon on the Mount, He called believers "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). In 1 John believers are described as those who "walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light" (1 John 1:7). Believers are not in intellectual darkness, because they know the truth (John 8:32; 1 Tim. 4:3; 2 Peter 1:12; 1 John 2:21; 2 John 1); nor are they in moral darkness, because they practice the truth (John 3:21; 3 John 11).

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Because the believer's nature is distinct from unbelievers, believers need not fear that this Day should overtake you as a thief. The Day of the Lord is a "day of darkness" (Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15); "the day of the Lord ... will be darkness and not light.... Will not the day of the Lord be darkness instead of light?" (Amos 5:18, 20). It is for the night people therefore day people need not fear the Day of the Lord; they will not be part of it.

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Far from being in the darkness, believers are all sons of light and sons of day (cf. Luke 16:8; John 12:36; Eph. 5:8). The phrase "sons of" is often part of Hebrew expression describing the dominant influence in a person's life. The Old Testament uses the phrase "sons of Belial" (Judg. 19:22; 1 Sam. 2:12; 2 Sam. 23:6) to describe worthless men who are by nature children of the devil (cf. 2 Cor. 6:15). Jesus nicknamed James and John "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17) because of their volatile, aggressive personalities. Therefore, to describe believers as sons of light is to say that light is the dominant influence in their lives. Adding the parallel phrase sons of day reinforces Paul's point – light belongs to day just as darkness belongs to night.

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To drive home his point, Paul states, We are not of night nor of darkness. As sons of light and sons of day, believers possess a different nature and future than those "in darkness".

Therefore, the Thessalonians did not need to fear missing the Rapture, being caught in the Day of the Lord, or experiencing God's wrath and condemnation. Believers live in a separate sphere of life, where judgment cannot come. Jesus has already taken our judgment upon Himself at the cross!

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So What ...

We need to be careful in how we view those trapped in darkness. We used to be children of darkness before we met Jesus.

Ephesians 5:8

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

To be effective ambassadors in this world we need to live and walk as “children of light.”

11

So What ...

It becomes difficult for the world to hear us, when we denounce sin, but turn and do the same things.

This week, I want you to spend some time evaluating your life.

How do you spend your time?

What do you do for entertainment?

Are you more like the world (which is under God’s judgment) or are you more like Jesus (Christlikeness).

Remember, it is not about you! There are those watching your life, and how you live will draw them to or push them away from the Gospel. Let’s commit ourselves to living in the light!

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