

## THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

### "Children of the Light"

1 Thessalonians 5:4-8

#### Introduction

1. The second coming of Christ is a part of the subject of eschatology. This word means the "study of last things." It affirms, therefore, that the Bible is indeed a book of prophecy and does not provide historical data alone.
2. Among the major themes of prophecy are those which relate to the church (e.g. rapture) and Israel (e.g. the revelation of the Messiah). It is this latter emphasis which is given attention in this section.
3. The thought here is the "day of the Lord," a phrase which connotes the tribulation and the millennial periods. There is no mention of the church in these verses. The finality of it all is seen in the words "and they shall not escape" (v. 3). This is horrendous. It marks that the day of the Lord brings justice to bear upon those who refuse our Lord as Savior and Redeemer.
4. True believers are not associated with this day of the Lord. It is this appeal which is made by Paul here. Study his forthright statements:

#### 1. THE DESIGNATION GIVEN vv. 4, 5.

##### a. Negatively

- 1) Not in darkness The phrase here is that the child of God stands separate from the events just described. The adversative particle is used. "In darkness" is a description of a position. It is the element in which one is.
- 2) Not of night This is an advance over the previous statement. The genitive implies ownership, hence believers do not belong to night (anarthrous).
- 3) Not of darkness This is the same genitival construction as the comment concerning "the night." We do not belong to darkness (anarthrous).

##### b. Positively

- 1) Sons of light The genitive is used here to demonstrate ownership. Paul notes they belong to light. Being sons suggests a birth (cf. John 1:11-13).
- 2) Sons of day There is no article here with "day" as there is none with "light." This affirms the quality of the sons. They belong to a certain group. While many do not want to categorize people, the Bible has no problem with putting people into boxes!

NOTE: The interchange of "ye" and "we" mark out the important issues of what is true of all believers. The facts stand not alone for Thessalonica, but for us today.

c. Purposefully The purpose clause "that..." indicates why believers are of a different sort. Paul does not expect that "the day" (i.e. the "day of the Lord") would overtake believers who are to be taken in the rapture. The verb "overtake" is used variously in the New Testament. (cf. John 1:5; Mark 9:18; Rom. 9:30; 1 Cor. 9:24). There is no reason for the day of the Lord to take possession of believers of this dispensation. It cannot take possession of them (cf. John 12:35).

## 2. THE EXHORTATION PROVIDED vv. 6, 7.

a. Regarding sensibility This is crowded in the verb "let us not sleep." This verb is used 21 times in the New Testament. Here it refers to indifference to spiritual things by believers. It implies a spiritual insensibility and relates to darkness (v. 7). The present tense suggests continuance, hence to fall into the trap of complacency. Other uses of this verb concern getting out of the problem (cf. Rom. 13:11; Eph. 5:14). The "therefore" (v. 6) is a strong phrase and comes with much force in the light of the previous verses.

b. Regarding alertness This is the import of the verb "watch." It is contrasted with the thought of sleep (Matt. 26:40), therefore it is used of intentness of mind in getting instruction (Prov. 8:34 LXX), looking for answer to prayer (Col. 4:2) and for the Lord's return (Mark 13:35-37), of vigilance against Satan (1 Pet. 5:8) or false teachers (Acts 20:31).

c. Regarding stability "Be sober" is the ground for this thought. It is a word which means to be free from the influence of intoxicants, but in the New Testament it appears to see freedom from excitability, hence the idea of stability is latent. It is contrasted with the excitement of drunkenness (v. 7). Its use in the New Testament advances the idea of sobriety of maturer years which comes as the result of self control and the study of the Word in youth (cf. 1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 4:5; Tit. 2:2; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4-7; 5:8).

NOTE: The rationale for these exhortations is given in v. 7: sleep is related to night as is drunkenness. The Thessalonians are not related to night (v. 5). Hence, we cannot be indifferent to the call for a contrasted activity.

Conclusion It is true that salvation is by grace through faith. God has done everything for us in Christ. To be saved is not something accomplished by one's own efforts. BUT, it will eternally also be true that IF one is saved by God's method, he will demonstrate the truth of that relationship by his knowledge of the Word and behavior. This is patent in the text. How goes it then with YOU?