

(Through the Bible) 1 Thessalonians 4-5

by Chuck Smith

Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians emphasizes the importance of living a pure and holy life, separate from the world and its corruption, and being diligent in our business and relationships.

Duration: 1:20:39

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 1:3

Topics: "End Times", "Second Coming"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of a worldwide monetary system and the potential use of computer chips as a form of identification. He mentions that this idea is being tested in Europe and could potentially be implemented globally. The preacher emphasizes the importance of being aware of the signs of Jesus' second coming, such as the existence of Israel as a nation and the gathering of European nations. He also mentions the development of electronic funds transfers and ID systems as signs of the times. The preacher encourages the audience to be watchful and prepared for Jesus' return.

Transcript

Let's turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. Paul the Apostle was called of God by the Spirit to go to Macedonia. As he saw in a vision a man from Macedonia saying, come over and help us. It was good that Paul did have a dramatic call of God because I'm certain that once he arrived in Macedonia and experienced some of the adverse reception, he could have very well questioned, Lord, did you really call me here? His first stop was at Philippi where evil men were stirred up against him and they had him arrested and beaten and he was thrown in the dungeon and then ordered out of town.

He next went to Thessalonica where after three Sabbath days in the synagogue, almost the whole town gathered to hear his message, but the Jews were stirred by envy and again, Paul had to leave town to save arrest. They had gone to the house of Jason where Paul was staying to arrest him, but he had already escaped. Having been such a short time in Thessalonica, they went to Berea.

Trouble stirred in Berea. Paul left Timothy and Silas there as he went on to Athens to sort of get the whole situation cooled down a bit. When Timothy and Silas had strengthened the brethren in Berea, they met Paul in Athens, but Paul's heart was stirred concerning those in Thessalonica that he had had such a short time to minister to.

Only three Sabbath days. Wondering how they were doing, he was stirred in his heart for them. He sent Timothy back to Thessalonica.

He went on to Corinth and began a ministry in Corinth. Timothy met Paul in Corinth, reported to him the condition of the church in Thessalonica. Basically, things were going on very well, but some problems had arisen.

And so, Paul immediately wrote to them to encourage them in the faith. And now, as we come into the fourth chapter, we have a definite change in the division of the book because in chapter four, Paul begins his exhortation. Up to this point, it's been sort of an apologetic, and now he begins to exhort them and he declares it in verse one, furthermore then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as you have received us, how you ought to walk and to please God, so you would abound more and more.

Again, as we mentioned last week, I am amazed that Paul was able to give them so much instruction in so many areas of doctrine in such a very short time. With them, less than a month, and yet he established them in sound doctrine. But as he said, he was laboring night and day among them.

But even, he said, as I talked to you before, how you ought to walk and please God. The basic desire of each of us should be to please God. That's the key to the Christian life.

The man who is outside of Jesus Christ lives to please himself. The man who is in Jesus Christ lives to please God. The man who lives to please himself is rarely pleased.

The man who lives to please God has found real satisfaction. I think one of the greatest pleasures in life is to know that you've done that which pleased the Father. I walk today in the will of God.

As Jesus said, I do always those things that please the Father. And so ought we to live to please God. For you know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication. Now you remember in the 15th chapter of Acts, when the early church had gathered to determine what relationship the Gentile believers should have to the law. Peter said, I suggest that we put no burden upon them, that neither we, the yoke of bondage on them, that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.

Paul testified of the miracles that were wrought through grace among the Gentiles. And then James says, let's put on them no greater burden that you've already received. Keep yourself from things that are strangled and from fornication.

And if you do this, you do well. God bless you. The Greek culture, the Roman culture, was a culture in which fornication was a very common practice.

In that pagan society, much of the worship of their gods involved fornication, as they sought to become one with their gods. And many of the spiritual rites within their temple were fornication. It was a very common practice in that culture.

And so Paul is exhorting them again to live a pure life, a sanctified life, a life that is set apart unto God and to keep themselves from the common practice of fornication. If ever there was a time when Paul's exhortation was needed, it is today, as we have again evolved into a pagan society. And these very

practices have become extremely common again.

It's a very accepted thing in our society. I was reading an interesting commentary that was written back in 1951. And in this commentary, it told about an article in the Woman's Home Journal in the October 1951 issue, I believe it was, that was an article against the smut and the pornography that had begun at that time to enter into the United States and how the city of Chicago was able to deal with it and get rid of all the smut peddlers and all of the pornography out of the city.

1951, but look how much we have degraded since then. And with the introduction of all of the pornography, I don't know if you can get a novel that's been written in the last 40 years that isn't centered around sexual subjects, incest, and all kinds of sexual experiences. It's in all of the novels.

It's just something that has pervaded the literature. And with it, an attitude of laxity towards real moral living. And so Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians is an important exhortation in our day that we are different from the world.

We are not to live to please our own flesh. We are to live to please God. We are to keep our lives separate from the world and from the corruption of the world in order that we might live a life that is pleasing unto Him.

And so this is God's will for you that you live a separated life, a life of dedication and consecration to God and keep yourself from fornication. Paul in Galatians 5 lists fornication as a part of the works of the flesh. But at the end of that list of the works of the flesh, he says something that we better pay close attention to.

He said, For we know that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul said, don't be deceived on this issue. And there are a lot of people that are deceived thinking that they can live any kind of a life that they want and God will accept their lower standard of living.

But God demands a high standard from His children. And Paul said that every one of you should know how to possess His vessel in sanctification and honor. Your vessel being your body.

We have this treasure, Paul said, in earthen vessels or in our bodies that the glory may be of God and not of us. But you ought to know how to keep your body in sanctification and honor, in purity and not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God. Vast difference between us and the world around us.

And there should be. That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter. Because that the Lord is the avenger of all such.

As we also have forewarned you and testified. Now, again, Paul said, you remember I told you about this. I testified to you about this.

Be honest and fair in your dealings with your brothers. We're not to defraud our brothers. My heart is grieved over the problems that have arisen within the body of Christ.

And especially in these days when a lot of the various businesses advertise with Christian symbols. And you expect from a Christian, you want to patronize them because first of all, you want the Christians to have the business. You hope for their success in business.

But you also expect honesty, forthrightness in dealing with a Christian. You expect them to be honest. You know the problems of taking a car to a mechanic.

There's just a lot of corrupt practices. There's a lot of unnecessary charges. There are a lot of charges for work that isn't done.

And so, if you find a Christian mechanic, you get excited and you say, oh, I can trust him. And we should be able to. And so, in any business, Paul here is warning, don't defraud, don't cheat.

Be square, be honest. I told you this when I was there. I forewarned you that God is the avenger.

Now, this is the problem, I think, with our society is that we have failed to take into consideration that there is a day of reckoning coming. That there is a day of judgment coming. People have gotten by with so much.

They've been able to get by. And of course, with the leniency of our courts today, they're getting by with more and more. Just hope that you don't get arrested for or pressed by the IRS.

That's about the only thing you go to prison for anymore. You know, or like this poor woman, Betty Beatty, who hit her child because the courts ordered her to deliver him over to her homosexual husband. And so she's facing imprisonment, though murderers and rapists can walk our streets.

She's a danger to our society, hiding her son from her homosexual husband and not turning him over for the visitation rights. And she needs to be dealt with and put in prison and taught a lesson. What a danger to our society.

But don't worry, you know, I cannot understand. No sense getting into that. So don't defraud your brother because God's going to judge you.

God is the avenger of all such which do that. And we've warned you about the judgment of God that's going to come. Paul was faithful in warning them.

And I think that we need to warn people about the judgment of God. You're not going to get by. Ultimately, God is going to judge.

He is the avenger of those that do such things. For God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. God said, be ye holy for I am holy, saith the Lord.

And God has called us to holy living, to pure living, living before him in all righteousness and purity and holiness. And he, therefore, that despises, that is, despises holiness, the holy life, is not despising man, but God. For God has given to us his Holy Spirit.

A lot of times when, you know, you start really emphasizing the living of a holy life and things of this nature, people get upset with you as though we were the ones that made the rules. No, we didn't make the rules. We weren't called to make the rules.

We were called to declare to you the rules that God has made. And if you have any argument with holiness, your argument is with God. And this is what Paul is saying to them.

You're not really having an argument with man. You're having an argument with God. He is the one that has given us his Holy Spirit.

Psychologists tell us that a person's mental equilibrium or well-balanced life depends upon the difference between their ego and their super-ego. Your ego being your real self and your super-ego being your ideal self. And if there is a vast difference between your ego and your super-ego, then you are mentally disturbed because of this difference that exists between the two.

And the closer a person's ego is to their super-ego, the more well-adjusted that person is mentally. And so when a person is having a conflict and he has very high ideals, the super-ego, this is me as I really, you know, am within my heart and all. This is the way I really know I should live and want to live.

But this is the way I'm living. And if there's a vast difference between the two, then I have real mental problems and I go to a head shrink and I tell him, hey, I, you know, just not getting along with anybody and all. And so he seeks to understand what my super-ego is.

What do I, how do I perceive myself? And then these things that I'm doing and that are troubling me. And the general practice is to bring my super-ego down closer to my ego. You're unrealistic.

Nobody lives that purely. You know, that's foolish to think that you should, you know, not do those things. Everybody is doing those things.

And what they're trying to do is bring down the level of the super-ego or bring down your ideals more in keeping with the reality of your own nature. When we come to Jesus Christ, He seeks to bring the ego up to the super-ego. Now, if we are guilty of trying to bring man's super-ego down to the level of the ego, then we are not really following the scriptural pattern.

For the gospel of Jesus Christ is always lifting and elevating a man into a life of purity and righteousness and holiness. And so God has given to us His Holy Spirit. And what is the purpose of the Holy Spirit? To conform us into the image of Jesus Christ.

For you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be witnesses. You can achieve the ideal. You can walk in holiness and purity as God has required us to walk.

And God, by the power of His Spirit, will lift us into a higher level of living closer to the ideal. And in fact, more and more we come closer to the ideal. As we, with an open face beholding the glory of the Lord, we're being changed from glory to glory into the same.

So the gospel is so elevating as it brings man up into the level that God would have him to live. God's not called us unto uncleanness. He's called us unto holiness and He has given us His Holy Spirit.

But as touching brotherly love, you don't need that I write unto you. You remember in the first chapter Paul said that everywhere they had such love, not only for their love was known and all, it was something that was a mark of the church there in Thessalonica. And the word of their love had spread abroad.

So touching brotherly love, you really don't need that I write unto you. For you yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed you do it toward all the brethren which are in all of Macedonia.

But we beseech you brother, do it more and more. In other words, increase. Though you have a great reputation of having love and all, I would that you would even continue to increase in this love.

We had a wonderful time at the family camp this last week as the Spirit ministered to us from the first epistle of John. And as God's Spirit ministered to us out of this epistle, the message that the Spirit kept bringing us back to and emphasizing was the importance of love towards one another. As John said, He that sayeth he loves God and hates his brother is a liar.

The truth isn't in him. By this we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. The mark of the true body of Christ is that of great love for one another.

Jesus said, By this sign shall men know that you are my disciples, that ye love one another. And so the love among the body of Christ is first of all a sign to the world that indeed they are the disciples of Jesus, but it also becomes the personal sign unto me that I have passed from death unto life because of the love that I have for the brethren. Now, as John told them, Beloved, let us not love in words, but in deeds and truth.

It isn't just saying, Oh, I love you, brother. In fact, there was a fellow around here for quite a while that used to always come up and say, Oh, we love you so much. Oh, we love you so much.

And he hated me more than anybody else. It's like Shakespeare said, Thou protestest too much. In the words, oh, he had the words.

But in the actions, in the deeds, there were cruel cutting things. It isn't what I am saying. It's what I am doing that God is observing.

And so we found that in 1 John. People say a lot of things, but what they say isn't necessarily true unless their life backs up what is being said. And so let us not love in words, John said, but in deed and in truth.

And so you've been taught of God to love one another. And indeed, you do it toward all the brethren. But we beseech you increase even more and more.

And that you study to be quiet. Now, this means to live sort of a quiet life. You know, with some people, everything is a crisis.

And they live from one crisis to the next. But he says study to be just live a quiet life. And that really is a simple life.

And we need to learn to just live a simple life, a quiet life, study to be quiet. And to do your own business and to work with your own hands as we commanded you. Now, evidently, there were some problems in the church in Thessalonica of some lazy brethren who would take advantage of the love.

Oh, we're supposed to love one another? Well, great. Just love me, brother, and pay my rent, you know, and bring me food and support me. And they weren't really willing to work.

They just wanted to go surfing all the time and be supported by the church. And when Paul wrote his second letter, which we'll be getting into next week, Paul, in his second letter, talked about these fellows a little more directly. And he said, look, if they don't work, don't feed them.

Let everyone work, laboring with his own hands. And he might provide that which is honest in the sight of the Lord. So, Paul's encouragement for us to be diligent in our business, to work laboring with our own hands, that you might walk honestly toward them that are without, and that you may have lack of nothing.

But I would not have you. And so now he leaves this area. Now we go into the interesting area of where are those who have died.

In the church of Thessalonica, Paul had taught them concerning the coming again of Jesus Christ and the establishing of God's kingdom upon the earth. A glorious truth and a blessed hope. But since Paul had been there, some of the members had died.

And they were grieving. They thought, oh, what a shame. They died before Jesus came.

And thus, they're going to miss the glorious kingdom of God. And they were really sorrowing and grieving over those who had died prior to the return of Jesus, figuring, oh, they've missed it. They died before He came.

So, this section Paul is devoting to correct their misconceptions concerning those who were asleep in Christ. And the term asleep does not at all connote soul sleep, but it is only a figure of speech to describe death and the death of the believer. You remember when Jesus came to the house of Jairus.

And the daughter, they said, don't trouble the Lord anymore. Your daughter is dead. And Jesus said, fear not, only believe.

And they came to the house. And everybody was wailing and crying. And Jesus said, the little girl isn't dead.

She's only sleeping. And they laughed Him to scorn. And so, He put them out.

You remember when He was at the Jordan River with His disciples. And they had received the message from Mary and Martha, come quickly. Lazarus is dying.

And He stayed for a couple of days at the Jordan River. And He said, now let us go that we might see Lazarus. And as they were talking, Jesus said, well, he's asleep.

And the disciples said, well, that's good. If he's sleeping, he's probably getting better. But Jesus was referring to the fact that Lazarus had died.

It's a phrase that was used in the Old Testament. You remember how many times it referred to the king. And he slept with his fathers.

It was a term that was used for the dead, usually of the believer. But it does not connote soul sleep doctrine. For those that are dead are certainly in a conscious state, as is declared by Jesus.

Now, you have Ecclesiastes, old King Solomon, coming as a humanist saying that, you know, the grave is the end. There's no thought. There's no consciousness or whatever.

But you have Jesus, on the other hand, saying that there was a certain rich man that fared sumptuously every day. And a poor man was brought daily and laid at his gate that was full of sores. And the dogs came and licked his sores.

And he ate the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. And the poor man died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. Moreover, the rich man died and in hell lifted up his eyes being in torment and seeing Abraham afar off and Lazarus being comforted said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and

send Lazarus unto me that he may take his finger and dip it in water and touch my tongue.

I am tormented in this heat. And so Jesus speaks of Hades as being a conscious state. Lazarus being comforted.

The rich man in a conscious state of torment. Now, you may try and pass that off as a parable, but there is no reason to pass that off in a parable. Never in a parable was any person named.

And if it was a parable, what is the purpose of a parable but to illustrate a truth? And if what Jesus said was not a truth, how can you illustrate a truth with a lie? And what was Jesus trying to illustrate? No, he definitely taught that Hades was a conscious state. And so, I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning them that are asleep that you sorrow not even as others which have no hope. Now, there's two kinds of sorrow for the dead.

That sorrow for them because you have no hope. The world's sorrow for the dead. They're gone.

It's all over. That's the end. But the sorrow of the believer is not as those who have no hope.

You see, our sorrow really isn't for the person that is gone. Our sorrow is for ourselves because we're still here. And we're going to miss them.

We sorrow for what's been taken from us. I won't be able to call them on the phone anymore. I won't be able to go over and see them.

I won't be able to receive the input that they have given into my life that has blessed me and meant so much to me. And I sorrow for what I have lost, but if they are a child of God, I rejoice for them that they are there in the presence of our Lord. So, we sorrow not as those who have no hope.

For if we believe, and surely we do, that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. Now, Jesus is coming again for His church. And when He comes, here Paul tells us that God is going to bring them, those that are asleep in Jesus, He's going to bring them with Him.

And this is important to note. Because a lot of people become confused on this issue. For this we say unto you, and Paul says this is by the word of the Lord.

This is a revelation from the Lord to us. That we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. They have actually preceded us.

We're not going to precede them. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

In writing to the Corinthians in his second epistle, Paul said, we know that when this earthly tent, our body is dissolved. That we have a building of God that is not made with hands, that is eternal in the heavens. So then, we who are living in these bodies do often groan earnestly desiring to be freed from the body.

Not that we would be unembodied spirits, not that we would be naked, but that we might be clothed upon with the body which is from heaven. For we know that as long as we are living in this body, we are absent

from the Lord, but we would choose rather to be absent from this body and to be present. With the Lord.

Therefore, we labor that whether present or absent, we'd be accepted of him. The Bible, you see, teaches that man basically is a spirit. Living in a body, possessing a consciousness.

The body is the instrument that God has given to me to be the medium by which I can express myself. The body is not me. It's only a tent in which I'm living for a while.

A tent that is gradually wearing out. And when this tent wears out, when the body through age, accident, illness, can no longer fulfill the purposes for which God planned and designed, then God in his love is going to release my spirit from this body. And when this tent is dissolved, I have a building of God not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

And so death for the child of God is just moving day when you move out of the tent and into the house. The building of God not made with hands. Jesus said in my father's house are many mansions.

I'm going to prepare one for you. I heard the other day of some high pressured evangelist who had some vision of dying and going to heaven and the Lord showing him his glorious new mansion. And he described, you know, the columns and everything.

Well, I hope my body doesn't look like that when I get there. The word is actually there are many abiding places. I'm going to prepare one for you.

The building of God not made with hands eternal in the heavens. A reference to our new bodies that our spirits will move into. Bodies that are designed by God to exist in the environmental conditions of heaven.

Even as God designed these bodies to exist in the environmental condition of the planet earth. And he made them out of the earth for the earth. So God has made a new body for me that is designed by God to exist in the environmental conditions of heaven.

A universal model. One that is adaptable probably for all kinds and environments. Whereas this body is quite limited.

It is necessary that I keep it right here close to earth. A couple of months ago up at Beale Air Force Base, we saw them suiting up the pilot for the SR-71. Going to fly that thing up 85,000 feet or so.

And so as they suited him up, it's the very same suits that they use for the astronauts, moon flights and all. And we watched them as they put on the suit, fasten on the helmet, fasten everything down, and then pressurized it, checked all the gauges to see that there was no leaks. The man who was giving us the briefing said that when you get up to 80,000 feet, if you did not have this pressurized suit on, the fluids in your body would begin to boil.

And they would pass right on out through the skin. Because the body is made and designed to withstand the 14 pounds of pressure per square inch. You get up there, you don't have that pressure pushing against the body.

And so you have to put on the pressure suit. God could give us all pressure suits. But we saw this guy as he then walked out to the van and they were carrying the two tanks of nitrogen and oxygen.

And he had to walk sort of funny because of the suit and all and clumped on out and they helped him to get in the van. And then they helped him out of the van and up the ramp and into the SR-71 where he sat down and then took off and went skyward. But God has designed a new body, a building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Vastly superior to the body that we now have. One that will not know aging processes. One that will not experience pain directly from God.

Perfect. One that will not age or grow tired. And so we who are in these bodies do often groan, earnestly desiring to be delivered or move out.

Not that I would be unembodied, an unembodied spirit out there in the ethereal universe someplace. But that I might be clothed upon with the body which is from heaven. Now, another aspect of the whole thing that needs to be taken into consideration.

And that is, I live in a time dimension continuum while I'm in this body and living on the planet earth. And so I talk about last week and next week. And I think of things in terms of past, present and future.

The moment I leave the earth plane, the body plane, I enter into the eternal where there is neither past or future, but everything is present. So, to be absent from the body is to be present in the eternal presence of the Lord. So, you can't really say that something is future once you enter into the eternal.

For everything is now. Those who are asleep in Jesus, the Lord is going to bring with him when he comes. For we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord aren't going to precede them.

They have preceded us. But the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel, the trump of God, the dead in Christ arise first, really. And we who are alive and remain at that point to be caught up to meet them together with the Lord.

And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Now, that's the important thing. So shall we ever be with the Lord.

The Lord is coming again to this earth to establish his kingdom reign. And he shall rule and reign over the earth for a thousand years. So shall we ever be with the Lord.

We will come and we will reign with him as a kingdom of priests upon the earth. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. And so the rapture of the church, the catching up.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 said, Behold, I show you a mystery. We're not going to all sleep, but we're all going to be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye. For this corruption must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality.

We won't die, but there is a necessary change. We will be changed in the moment in the twinkling of an eye as we move out of our tents and into our new buildings of God, not made with hands, the new bodies that God has prepared for us. How old will I be? What will I look like? Well, you know, there are some people that sort of object to the change of body.

They want to sort of hang on to what they look like. Personally, I don't anticipate having gimpy football knees anymore. And I imagine I will have a head of hair and a few other things that have been missing for a while.

I won't be wearing these glasses. It's interesting, we really don't know, except that Paul said, some of you will say, how are the dead raised and what kind of a body will they come? You know, when they come with Jesus, what kind of a body will they have? Will we know them? Will we recognize them? And he said, when you plant a seed into the ground, it does not come forth into new life until it first of all dies. And then, notice, the body that comes out of the ground is not the body that you planted.

But God gives it a body as pleases Him. So is the resurrection of the dead. I don't expect this body to be resurrected and refurbished, refitted.

I'm looking forward to moving into a whole new model. A building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The body that comes out of the ground is not the body that you planted.

All you planted was a bare grain, by chance wheat or some other grain. And God has given it a body as pleases Him. So is the resurrection of the dead.

We are planted in corruption, but we're going to be raised in incorruption. We're planted in weakness, but we're going to be raised in power. We are planted in dishonor.

We're going to be raised in glory. We are planted as a natural body. We're going to be raised as a spiritual body.

And the difference between the celestial and the terrestrial and so forth, then, as we have borne the image of the earth and been earthy, so shall we bear the image of the heavens. So, you can interpret and understand that as you wish. But I am looking forward to that building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

That new body where my spirit shall dwell, and I shall live and be with Him in His kingdom forever. That's the important thing. This corruption must put on a metamorphosis, change of body.

And the Bible teaches that's what death is to the child of God. Now, of the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

But when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, and here's the key, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. The day of the Lord is coming.

Jesus referred to His coming as a thief in the night. But Paul is saying, you are the children of the light so that that day should not overtake you as a thief. I believe that the Lord intended us to be knowledgeable of Bible prophecy and thus knowledgeable of the signs of His coming.

And certainly there are interesting signs of His coming in the world today. Israel existing as a nation. Tremendous sign of the coming again of Jesus Christ.

Europe gathered together in a community of 10 nations. An interesting sign of the return again of Jesus Christ. The capacity of man to destroy himself off of the planet Earth.

Another sign for except those days be shortened, no flesh would remain. But for the elect's sake, they shall be shortened. The development of electronic funds transfers.

The development of an ID system. Now putting a computer chip upon a card that can store all kinds of information, even record and keep in memory every transaction that you've made with a card. Being used now in Europe, being tested in France, used in Europe as a possible model for a worldwide monetary system.

And the talk of taking that same computer chip because the cards are lost and stolen and implanting it within a person's wrist. So a mark, an identity where people buy and sell with that mark and identity. Of the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write into you.

You know he's coming as a thief, but you're not the children of darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. You're children of the light. Children of the day, not of night nor of darkness.

And therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober. Now as Jesus talked in the 24th chapter of Matthew concerning his coming again, there were two things that he emphasized on in the chapter 25. One, watch.

Two, be ready. Paul here is emphasizing watch. Be sober.

And so I do believe that it is the intent of the Lord that his church in all ages live in anticipation of his imminent return. And that two things they should, number one, be watching. And number two, they should be ready.

Therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

For God has not appointed us to wrath, praise the Lord, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. God's wrath is going to come upon the earth. Jesus said, quoting from Daniel, and there shall be a time of great tribulation such as the world has never seen before or ever see again.

And in the book of Revelation from chapter 6 through 18, we have details details of that great judgment of God that will be coming upon the earth. And as we are moving in the book of Revelation now on Thursday evenings, we'll be studying this as we go along. But this great judgment that is coming in the book of Revelation is called in the book of Revelation the day of his wrath.

The wrath of his indignation being poured forth as the rich men and the kings and all of the earth call him to the rocks in the mountains to hide them from the face of the land and from his judgment for the day of his wrath has come and who shall be able to stand. As far as the church is concerned, Jesus said in this world, you'll have tribulation. But Jesus identifies Satan as the culprit behind the tribulation that the child of God experiences living on this alien world.

But the Bible definitely identifies the source of the great tribulation as being God and his judgment as he comes to judge those who are dwelling upon the earth. And when the wrath of God is poured out, we have not been appointed unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord. And that is why we should be watching and we should be sober.

Jesus said that that day is going to come and catch many as a snare. And so pray that you'll always be accounted worthy to escape these things that are going to be coming to pass upon the earth and to be standing upon before the Son of Man, for as a snare shall it come upon the earth. And therefore, he warns

us against drunkenness, against surfeiting, against living after the flesh that we be caught unaware.

And so the same message of watching be sober, be diligent. The Lord has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

And that is the whole thing, whether I'm dead or alive, I'm going to be living together with him. That's what Jesus was talking about when he said to Martha, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

And if you live and believe in me, you'll never die. I'm never going to die. I'm going to always live for Jesus and with Jesus.

And whether, you know, in this body or in my new body, I'm going to be living with him. So as Paul said, whether we wake or sleep, we are living together with him in one form or the other, in this body or my new one. I won't die.

I will be living together with him. Wherefore, comfort yourselves together and build up one another even as you do. And so the building up of one another in Christ, the encouraging of one another in the Lord.

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you. So those that God has chosen to have the oversight of the body of Christ, to minister to them and admonish them in the truth of God, Paul said to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake and be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those that are unruly.

Now he's going to give us a bunch of little exhortations here. Warn those that are unruly. You see a person that is not living right, warn him.

God called Ezekiel to warn him and told him the importance of his ministry of warning those unrighteous people and those righteous who had turned from their righteousness. Comfort the feeble minded. We have a tendency many times to become annoyed with the feeble minded, you know, to pass them off.

But we are told here we ought to be comforting the feeble minded. God bless them. You know, our hearts should be going out to them and we should be patient and seek to comfort them rather than being brusque and short.

Support the weak. Be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man.

Oh, isn't that difficult how we love to get even, but see that we don't. But ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all. Rejoice evermore.

Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Again, I would call your attention to the fact it doesn't say for everything give thanks.

That would be hypocritical. I cannot honestly give thanks for a lot of things. But I can give thanks in them.

I can't give thanks really for the problems that I face. But I can give thanks in the problems. I don't give thanks for the trials, but I give thanks to God in the trials.

If I've lost everything, I don't thank God for the fact that I've lost everything. But I thank God in the losses, not for the losses. Because I know that God is in control of my life.

I know that God is controlling those things that happen to me because I've committed my life to Him. And I know that God loves me. And I know that God is working out a wise plan in my life, and He is wiser than I. And I know that God can see the long term where all I can see is the short term.

And so in everything that happens to me, because God is controlling those happenings, because God is governing my life, I give thanks to God in everything. That He loves me, that He's in control, that He is guiding the things of my life, and that He's going to work out His good, eternal plan and purposes in me. In everything give thanks.

Quench not the spirit. Now, a lot of people use this Scripture to tolerate all kinds of foolishness going on within the body of Christ. You know, someone screaming outlandishly and running up and down the aisle screaming and all.

And in their second pass, Romaine catches them and takes them outside. And you know the first thing they say to Romaine, the Bible says quench not the spirit. Well, that's not what Paul is talking about.

There is a spirit that is to be quenched. The human spirit. We are told, grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.

How is the Holy Spirit grieved? How do we quench the Spirit? You know, one of the greatest quenches of the Spirit is a lack of love. That's how we quench the Spirit. The Spirit's work in our hearts and in our lives can be hindered by bitter feelings, by hatred and jealousy and animosity and those kind of feelings.

That's what quenches the work of the Spirit within your life. And so, it's really talking about that work of God's Spirit within your life. Don't quench it.

The fruit of the Spirit you see is love. And that is what the Spirit is seeking to produce in you, is that love. Don't quench the Spirit.

Open up to love. Open up to be an instrument of love. Open up to be a channel of God's love.

Release yourself to love. A lot of times we have a hesitancy in this because we've been burned in the past. We've been hurt.

I love them and then they rejected me and we feel so rejected that we begin to close up and we won't open up to love. And as we close up and tighten up, we're actually quenching the Spirit. Quench not the Spirit.

Despise not prophesying. Prove all things. And of course, with prophecy that is necessary to be proved.

As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14, when one prophesies, let the others judge. And so, it is tied together here. Despise not prophesying and yet prove all things.

I've had some people give me some off-the-wall, thus saith the Lord, prophecies. Several years ago, I had a man prophesy that I was going to be carried out of the church in a casket within two weeks. He didn't like the fact that I didn't go along with his Jesus-only doctrine.

And so, God was going to judge me. He had this vision and he prophesied, thus saith the Lord, you know, in two weeks they're going to carry you out in this black coffin. Well, I knew that was wrong because my wife would never get a black coffin from me.

An interesting thing, I had that man's funeral service within two weeks. So, I just told my wife evidently he saw the wrong face in the casket. Prove all things.

Someone gives you a prophecy, just don't accept it. Prove it. Don't despise it though.

Take it. And I get a lot of, I get a lot of, thus saith the Lord, and a lot of mail. And, you know, a lot of people feel that God has used them as the channel to speak to me.

And I want to be open. God knows my heart. I want to be open.

A lot of times, you know, you get sort of burned on these things, you know. And, and you don't even bother to read them because there's a certain kind of a a pattern to them all. And yet, I, I don't want to despise prophecy.

I want to be open. I want God to be able to speak to me through everyone. I can recognize, I accept that God can use others to speak to me.

And I am open to God speaking to me however. I want God to speak to me however he wants to speak to me. But on the other hand, I feel that it is incumbent that I do prove all things.

And then hold fast that which is good. I think that this is Chuck Missler's sort of a motto whenever he speaks. He just says, hey, I'm going to say a lot of wild stuff.

And I don't want you to believe anything I say. I want you to prove all things and then hold fast that which is true. Be like the Bereans, more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they went and searched the scriptures to see if these things be of God.

Prove all things and then hold fast that which is good. Here's an important one, abstain from all appearance of evil. I love this sparkling apple juice.

And now treetop has come out with sparkling apple juice. But they put it in these large green bottles, you know, with a gold foil at the top and all. And I hate to buy it because I'm afraid someone will see me checking out and say, oh, he's, you know, buying wine or champagne or something, you know, because of the bottle that they put it in.

So it's sort of a dilemma. I want to abstain from all appearances of evil. But the Lord is taking care of that.

Price Club has it in the case and they're little 12 ounce bottles and no foil or anything. So I now get my sparkling apple juice. I do think that we need to be very sensitive on the appearances of things to shun the appearance of evil.

Um, there are those couples that often come and say, well, we're living together in the same house, but we're not sleeping together. Well, who knows? You know, the neighbors, surely they don't know. And it has the appearance of evil and we are told.

And I think we need to abstain from all even appearances of evil. We don't want to stumble anybody. And the very God of peace set you apart wholly or completely.

And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved. Notice Paul recognizes the trichotomy of man, your whole spirit, your whole soul, and your whole body. The three parts of man's being body, soul, consciousness, and spirit.

Spirit, which is dead until we receive the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And we are made alive once dead in trespasses and sins, but now alive unto God through the spirit. The spirit has come alive.

Now, psychology and humanism and the universities today teach the dichotomy of man. They teach that the soul and spirit of man are synonymous. It is only those who have been born again by the Spirit of God and experienced the spiritual life that are trichotomous.

And the reason why we are trichotomous is because our spirit has come alive. And we know that the spirit of man is separate and distinct from the consciousness of man. But the natural man cannot understand the things of the spirit and neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.

So try to argue this with the natural man and you get nowhere. He has no way of understanding, no way of comprehending. And the Lord brought me to this after several arguments with the college professor in my sociology class on the subject of the soul and the spirit being separate entities, distinct, and he was a dichotomist, a humanist.

And we went round and round until one day as I went out of the class talking to myself about that poor, ignorant man, the Lord spoke to my heart and said, look, you're trying to teach him something he cannot know. The natural man cannot understand the things of the spirit, neither can he know them, they are spiritually discerned. It is only when you're alive in the spirit that you can understand the things of the spirit, the realm of the spirit.

And so those who are natural, trying to approach the word of God with the natural wisdom and understanding, become confused when you get to the realm of the spirit. But he which is spiritual understands all things, though he is not understood. So your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless under the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is your whole man.

God preserve me physically, my body. God preserve my mind, my consciousness, and God preserve my spirit blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calls you who also will do it.

Oh, how glorious to be called of God, because God is faithful and having begun a good work in us, he will continue to perform it. Brethren, pray for us. In almost all of his epistles, Paul was asking the people to pray for him as he mentions how he prays for them.

And that's what the body of Christ is all about, bearing one another's burdens and fulfilling the law of Christ, praying one for another. Brethren, pray for us and greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. Now, there over in Greece, we went to church in Athens and the brothers all came up and they kissed you on both cheeks.

The practice is still there in Greece. In Rome, the same thing, the brothers all come up, kiss you on both cheeks, you know. And it's a neat experience.

It's something that is sort of different to our culture here, but it is a common greeting in that area. I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. So we've really sort of obeyed the commandment here in reading this epistle to all of you, holy brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Amen. So, next week into the 2 Thessalonians, and we'll take the whole book of 2 Thessalonians next week. Only three chapters and they're all short.

So, 2 Thessalonians for next week as we move through the Bible. And now be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only. May God help us to put into practice those things that He has taught us in His Word.

Following the exhortations of Paul, may we live a holy, righteous life before God and man, loving one another more and more as we look for that glorious day when our Lord shall come and we shall be changed by His Spirit into His own glorious image according to His mighty power whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the peace of His Holy Spirit keep you in Christ in Jesus' name.

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