

# Week of Meetings-03 Will the Church Go Thru the Tribulation

by Dwight Pentecost

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*Dwight Pentecost argues that the church will not go through the tribulation period, emphasizing the hope of the rapture and God's promise of salvation.*

**Duration:** 55:15

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 5:1

**Topics:** "End Times", "Salvation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by praying for the guidance and understanding of the Holy Spirit. The sermon focuses on the topic of the translation of the church and the coming of the Lord. The preacher emphasizes that the timing of these events is unknown and compares it to the unexpected arrival of a thief in the night. The sermon also highlights the importance of being prepared and living in the light as children of God, rather than being in darkness. The preacher concludes by reminding the congregation that God has not appointed them to wrath, but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

First Thessalonians 5, beginning at verse 1. But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye 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. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with a child, and they shall not escape.

For ye, brethren, are not in darkness, but that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

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 an helmet the hope of salvation.

For God 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. May God add his blessing to the reading of this portion of his word. Will the church go through the tribulation period? There are few, if any, prophetic questions that are more vigorously being debated today than that question.

There are a number of different answers given to this problem. There are some who say that the church is going through all of the tribulation period. There are others who say, no, the church is going through half of it and then will be raptured.

There are others who say, no, the church will not go through any of the tribulation period. Then there are yet others who say those of the church who have been sanctified will be taken out before the tribulation begins, and the rest will be left to go through the tribulation period. You can see that there are a great many conflicting ideas on this subject, and I want to devote our time of study together on this subject this evening to try to give you the comfort and assurance of the word of God, that as you live from day to day you might have the earnest conviction that we are not looking for the events of the wrath of God, but that we are looking for our Lord from heaven who shall translate us into his presence and transform us into his glory.

In the previous studies which we have had together, we have defined some terms that we have to speak about again this evening. We believe that the next event in prophecy is what we call the rapture, or the translation of the church. The word rapture in the old English sense of the word does not mean joy, it means to snatch away or to take out.

Sometimes we refer to that event of 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 as the rapture of the church, or the translation of the church, when the Lord Jesus Christ is going to appear in the heavens, and he is going to call out of the grave the body of everyone who has died in Christ, who is a member of the body of Christ or the church, and he is going to call up with them every living believer on the earth at that time, and those dead resurrected ones and the living ones who have been translated and transformed are going to be joined into one body, and they are going to meet the Lord in the air, and thus shall we ever be with the Lord. We found that after the tribulation period, the earth will experience the time of tribulation. We have seen from the word of God that the tribulation period is seven years in duration.

It is a time of judgment, of indignation, of wrath, of darkness, of blackness, when the wrath of God is poured out upon unbelieving men, upon nations that have rejected Christ and the message of the gospel. Now, the problem we face this evening is, what is the time of this translation, or this rapture of the church, in reference to the tribulation period? Translating it into practical language, it is this. Are we waiting for the man of sin? Are we waiting for the great world wars that will sweep across the face of the earth and wipe out tens and hundreds of thousands of men? Are we looking for the great world dictators expecting him to put us to death, or are we looking for a translation out of this earth before these awesome and awful events begin to transpire upon the earth? What is our hope? I remember some years ago now, I was teaching at what was then the Philadelphia Bible Institute, and it was my privilege to teach the doctrines of future things in the prophetic subject.

Year by year, I would take classes through these doctrines and try to ground them in the teaching of the word of God. It was my earnest conviction then, as it is now, that the church would not go through any portion of the tribulation period, and I used to have a mimeograph list of some 22 reasons why I believed the church would not go through the tribulation period. Pentecost 22 reasons became quite famous because no student ever dared to come to an examination without having memorized those reasons for fear that I would ask that question on the final exam.

I never did, but they always anticipated the worst. I cannot quite figure out why students always think that the dean is coming out in the professor at the time of final examination, but they do. But the students were

not in the dark as to what my position on this contested doctrine was, and on one occasion when I was taking the class through this part of our course, and was ready to present the reasons why the church would not go through the tribulation period, I was greeted at the door by a stranger, and he said, May I have the privilege of sitting in on your class? And I said, Why certainly.

And a little bit later, some of the students began to come in, and they came and whispered to me, You know who that is? They mentioned to me. And I said, Well, what does that mean? I know he has a famous name and all the rest of it. And they said, Well, he believes the church is going through the tribulation period, and he is here to debate the issue with you, and we want to see it give good.

And you know that students will tear a teacher apart among themselves, but let somebody from the outside come in, and they'll defend him to the last stitch, and I can be very thankful of that. And so, whatever they thought of me or of my classes, they were sure that I could out-argue and out-quote scripture to this brother. And so, they were waiting to see what would happen, and for the fireworks to begin.

And I had just started on my lecture for the day, and that guest hands up, and he said, Mr. Pentecost, but, he says, can I ask a question? And to the chagrin of all the students, I said, no sir. I said, I'm employed by the institute to teach these students the doctrines of the word of God, and not to debate them before the students of the students of judgment. I'd be glad to discuss it with you outside of class, and it's based now.

The students likewise. But, the dean was behind me, and if you knew the size of the dean, that was sufficient. And as I began, after the class was over, and the young man came, and he just went this way through the students that were between the two of us to get to me in a hurry, and he was ready to go to battle for his position.

And I said to him, do you think that the church is going through the tribulation period? He said, yes, I do. And I said, I wish you would tell me then, what is your blessed hope? I said, my blessed hope is that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to appear in the heavens, and take me to himself, and I'm going to be translated out of this awful scene of carnage and death that will be poured out in the visitation of God's wrath. Tell me, what is your hope? And he said, my hope and confident expectation is that I shall be martyred for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is my hope. And I said, is that a blessed hope to you? To be martyred? He turned around and walked away. That young man was later martyred.

He was one of the five that lost their lives in trying to bring the gospel to the Afro-Indians in South America. But, he was not martyred because the church was going through the tribulation period, and I am confident that in the presence of the Lord, he knows better tonight about these doctrines. Thank God for those who are willing to lay down their lives for the gospel, but I am thankful from the word of God that our blessed hope is not that we can wait for the martyred sword or for the dictator's bullet to terminate our lives because of the events that happened.

Just briefly this evening, I want to mention some of the various views on this before I try to give you just a few of the reasons why the church is not going through the tribulation. Now, don't get scared. I'm not going to try to give those 22 reasons.

When I came to write on this subject some years ago, that list grew from 22 to about 28, or something like that. I've forgotten how many, and we would be here until midnight if I tried to give you all the reasons. But I do want you to be able to contrast these different views, because I am certain that you will not have talked to people about the Lord's coming very long before these questions will be raised.

There are several rather long words that I want you to be able to rattle off your tongue until they become second nature for you. I want you to be able to discuss mid-tribulation rapturism, post-tribulation rapturism, pre-tribulation rapturism, and partial rapturism. Now, that's what we're going to do tonight.

Now, these words are really very simple. You take, first of all, the partial rapture position, and that is the view widely held by those of a Pentecostal background who believe that when the Lord Jesus Christ comes into the clouds to take up the church into the air, only those will be caught up to meet the Lord who have had some second blessing, or some second work of grace, or who are sanctified or made holy in their daily walk. They believe that the body of Christ is going to be divided into two parts, and that part will go to be with the Lord, but the unsanctified or the unsecond blessing part will be left on the earth to go through the tribulation as a Protestant purgatory, to burn away the sins, to sanctify us fully that we might have a second work of grace.

I myself have to reject this interpretation, even though it is held by some very devout and God-fearing people, for I read in the word of God that the death of Christ removes every sin. The death of Christ gives me a standing before God so that God accepts me in the beloved. The death of Christ removes every transgression and gives to me as a gracious gift eternal life and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and I submit to you on the authority of the word of God that there is not one single reason why God should keep me out of heaven at the time of the rapture because of the gift that he has given to me in the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The value of the death of Christ makes a partial rapture impossible, and further, the unity of the body of Christ makes a rapture impossible. We're going to study it later in our series when we come to the marriage of the Lamb, that God is calling out a people whom he is going to give to his son as his bride. You mean to tell me that when the bride is presented by the Father to the Son, the bride is going to have a hand missing here, and an ear missing there, and a leg missing here because the part of the body was unfit to be presented to the Lord? What a ridiculous thing, for everyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as a personal Savior has been made a member of the body of Jesus Christ, and will become a part of that bride presented by the Father to the Son.

And then I have to reject this doctrine, because it makes the basis of our blessed hope our own work, our own righteousness. It's a question, have I sanctified myself enough to get by when the rapture comes? God is not going to accept me into heaven because I've sanctified myself, or I have stopped this or given up that. He's going to accept me solely on the basis of the work of Christ.

And so, just briefly, we have to set aside the doctrine that only those who have had the second blessing, or have been sanctified, or who are watching for his coming, will be translated into sudden. Then there is second, the doctrine or the teaching that we call the post-tribulation rapture position. Post, of course, is a prefix which means after, and post-tribulation means after the tribulation.

If you're familiar with post-posting, that means it gets to you after post it has been posted. So, post, you see, means after, and it'll help you remember it that way. The post-tribulation rapturist is the individual who says that the church is going to go through the seven years of that tribulation period, is going to undergo

all the fire of the judgment of the wrath of God, and then will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and immediately come back to the earth with him.

They do not deny that there will be a rapture of First Thessalonians 4, but they say that that one is caught up to come immediately back to this earth to be with the Lord. The church then must undergo all the wrath of God that we looked at last time in our study of God's picture of the tribulation period. Now, the scriptures that they use to prove this, and they have scripture for it, comes principally from a passage like John chapter 15 verse 18 and 19, where our Lord says, if the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

If you were of the world, the world would love his own, but because you're not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. And then in chapter 16, verse 1 and 2, our Lord says, These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogue, yea, the time shall come that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God's service.

And our Lord is speaking of trials, of testings, and of tribulations that his disciples will have to go through for Christ's sake. And the point that they miss in using these scriptures is that the word tribulation is used in two different senses in the word of God. It is used, first of all, of any severe trial that comes upon an individual because he lives in this body and in the midst of this world that is under the control of Satan.

And the word of God does promise that we shall have tribulation, for our Lord says that in this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Yet the word tribulation is used in a second sense, and it is used of future things of that seven year period when the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth. Now, God did promise that all believers living in this world would undergo tribulation, but that is not a promise that we will undergo the tribulation that will take place on the earth after the Lord has come.

Now, the problem in this view, that I believe we have to notice, is that the word of God has described for us in detail the tribulation. It is said, as we saw last week, that the tribulation is a period of wrath, a period of judgment, a period of the indignation of God against men. And yet what promise has been given to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? Romans 8.1. There is therefore now no what? Or better translated, judgment.

There is no judgment to them that are in Christ Jesus. For in 1 John chapter 2 and verse 17, John tells us that as Christ is in this world in relationship to judgment, so are we. That as Christ cannot be brought into judgment because of sins again.

No more can we be brought into judgment for sin. Now, when the tribulation period is poured out upon the earth, as we saw last time, to purify Israel, to judge sinners, to discipline Gentile nations, to prepare them for the kingdom, and to see God's judgment and vengeance upon sin and sinful men, the church cannot be in that period and undergo visitation of God, or let God be a liar. For God says there is no judgment of any kind, and since the tribulation is a period of judgment, the church cannot go through that tribulation at all.

Then there is the group that we call the mid-tribulation position. The mid-position says that the church is going to go through half of the tribulation. As we noted on the blackboard last week, the tribulation period itself of seven years duration is divided into two equal parts of three and one-half years each.

The exponents of this position say that the church will go through the first three and a half years of the seven, then the rapture will take place, and the church will be delivered from only the last three and a half years of the tribulation. When we studied this period last time, we saw that during the first half of the tribulation period, there would be wars and rumors of war. There would be pestilence, and there would be famine.

There would be widespread desolation and decimation as the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth. And just as the church cannot go through the last part of the tribulation period, the church cannot go through the first part of the tribulation period either, unless God should be a liar, for He has said there is no judgment at all to them that are in Christ Jesus. Now, we have tried just briefly, in a sentence or two, to acquaint you with these different views because someone before long is bound to ask you whether you are a mid-trib or a post-trib or a partial rapturous or just what you are, and I want you to have a vague familiarity, anyway, with these terms.

We want to come to consider now what the Scripture teaches concerning the time of the translation of the church, and I want to give you just several reasons that are sufficient for me to demonstrate the fact that the church will not go through any of that awful period that will be poured out upon the earth. First of all, may I suggest the very nature of the tribulation period itself precludes the church from going through any of it. This is a little bit repetitious to what we said a moment ago, but may I point out to you that this tribulation period is a period of wrath.

We looked at Scripture after Scripture last week, and we cannot take time to do it again, that shows us that God is going to pour out judgment upon Christless and godless men who have submitted themselves to the authority of the man of sin, and are enmeshed in a lawless, godless system that is a manifestation of the power of Satan. And, since that tribulation period has within it not one ray of hope or of light, God could not put the bride for his son in that period, for the church does not need any visitation of the wrath of God. The church has been cleansed, the church has been purchased, the church has been set apart to Jesus Christ, the church that was in the plan of God from eternity past has been brought together, and every member united to the living head Jesus Christ, and God will not permit his blood-bought, redeemed ones to go through that period of judgment and experience the outpouring of his wrath.

But someone will say, but haven't saints always had to suffer, and don't saints need to be cleansed? Yes, that is true, in our walk daily we need cleansing, but God's method of cleansing his child who has become defiled in his pilgrimage is not descending through the fires of judgment to burn out that sin. God has an established method, and that method is 1 John 1 9, that we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. God's method of cleansing the sinner is through the blood of Jesus Christ.

God's method of cleansing the saint who sins is through the blood of Jesus Christ, and God is not going to set aside the blood of Jesus Christ and say, I will use a branding iron to burn sin out of them. The tribulation period, because of its very nature, precludes the church from going through it. In the second place, may I suggest that the purposes of the tribulation period prevent the church going through it.

We tried to outline the divine purposes in the tribulation period last time. May I just briefly summarize for your thinking that which God is going to accomplish? First of all, from Revelation chapter 3 and verse 10, the tribulation is coming to try them that dwell upon the earth. It is to prove that earth dwellers, or the earthlings, are not born again.

God is going to use the tribulation period to separate those who accept the gospel from those who reject the gospel, and at the end of the tribulation, there will be a multitude from every kindred and tongue and tribe and nation that have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But the very fear of persecution will have kept many from accepting Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. So, God, first of all, is going to try them that dwell on the earth.

In the second place, God is going to use the tribulation period to cleanse the nation Israel. We find that in Exodus chapter 20, God is going to cause his people Israel to pass under the rod of judgment, to purge out the rebels, and to bring a people to himself. And the very experiences through which Israel will go in the tribulation period will bring many of them to a dependence upon God for deliverance from the awful fire of his wrath.

God is going to use it in the life of the nation Israel. God is going to use it in the Gentile nation, for the Gentiles will have the gospel proclaimed to them as the gospel has never been proclaimed before, and God's emissaries will go from one end of the earth to the other to carry the message of salvation through Jesus Christ during those seven years of the tribulation period. But they will refuse to turn to God, and God is going to bring this discipline upon them because they have rejected Jesus Christ as a personal savior.

And then God is going to give Satan an opportunity to demonstrate what his system is like, and what the earth will be like, and what his kingdom will be like when he has authority on this earth when all restraint from God has been taken away. Now, you will observe that in all of those divine purposes of the tribulation period, to try to purge Israel, to chasten Gentiles and sinners, and to manifest the system of Satan, the Church has no relationship to that program at all. It has no part there, for God is not working with the Church.

God is working to fulfill an entirely different program. Then I believe that we ought to understand the passage in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2, that to me gives us another reason for believing that the Church will not go through the tribulation period. Now, I realize that there are many different interpretations of this passage, and I can only take you through it briefly this evening to try to give you my understanding of this important passage that lets you see how I believe it supports this hope that is given to us.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, beginning at verses 1 and 2, you will observe that the Apostle Paul is writing because some of them in Thessalonica had a misunderstanding. They were going through great persecutions. They began to wonder, could these persecutions we're going through be the persecutions of the tribulation period? And if so, they reasoned, what happened to Paul's teaching? Because Paul taught us we wouldn't go through the persecutions of the tribulation period.

Here we're going through persecutions. So they wanted to know two things. Are the persecutions or sufferings we're enduring the sufferings of the tribulation? Second, was Paul right when he taught us in 1 Thessalonians that we wouldn't go through the tribulation period? So Paul has to write because some very clever fellow had written a letter and had signed the Apostle Paul's name to it.

And these people said, well look, Paul has written this himself. He's evidently changed his mind, and they tried doing it by a forged letter. So Paul has to write and say in 2 Thessalonians 1, Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as though it came from us, that the day of Christ are better translated as the day of the Lord, or the tribulation period is already at hand.

Now, he said, some smart aleck is telling you in my name that the day of the Lord or the tribulation has already come, and therefore Paul's doctrine is wrong. Paul says, I'm going to prove to you we can't be in the tribulation period yet. He says, verse 3, let no man deceive you by any means, as though we were already in the tribulation.

For that day, that is of the tribulation, shall not come except there come literally a departure, and the man of sin be revealed the son of perdition. Now, the departure or the falling away may be either the falling away of the saints from the true faith or the apostasy of the last days, or it may be the departure of the saints from the earth, and I believe there is good reason for adopting that second interpretation. He says, let me tell you, you can't be in the tribulation period because, first of all, the departure hasn't taken place, and second, the man of sin hasn't been revealed, the son of perdition.

Now, who is the son of perdition? The man of sin. We're going to spend an hour on him some night, and we're going to see that he is the head of the revived Roman Empire, the head of the federated states of Europe that will appear on the world scene. And Paul says, as long as this head of the revived Roman Empire has not yet come, and all the world has not yet been brought under this one world dictator, you ought to know you can't be in the tribulation period.

And he describes this individual who will come. He is one, verse 4, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, so that he is worshipped, and he is going to sit in the temple of God trying to prove to all men that he is God. Now, come to verse 6. Let me change the old English reading for a little more modern reading.

Verse 6 says, Now ye know what restraint that he, the man of sin, might be revealed in the appointed time that God has for him. The mystery of lawlessness has already worked. Paul says that Satan has been trying to bring his world ruler on the scene.

Satan would like to have translated Caesar. He would like to have translated Nero into the man of sin. He would like to have turned Hitler or Stalin into the man of sin.

He would love to have gotten hold of one of these world dictators, and made him the capstone of Satan's great program, but he wasn't able to do it. Why not? Something was restraining Satan from doing his work. You know that the mystery of lawlessness or iniquity already works.

Only he who now restrains will keep on restraining until he'd be taken out of the way. Now, I use what you probably will take as a rather crude illustration. It isn't the first time, but if it gets a point across, you'll forgive me.

Suppose you catch a skunk. I mean, not a pet one, but one of the wild varieties. You put that skunk in a barrel.

You clamp a lid on that skunk, and then you sit on the lid to keep him from getting out. Now, you've got that skunk in a barrel, and you'll keep him from running around wild, and casting his scent every place he goes. But that skunk in that barrel can still kick up an awful stink, and that's what Satan is doing now.

God has him confined. God is restraining, and God is holding, and God has him in a barrel with a lid clamped on it, and someone is restraining, keeping that lid off. He can still cause an awful stink.

You don't have to get very far outside of church before you can smell his activities around. He's sure doing this, but the time is coming when God is going to say, all right, let's take the lid off that barrel, and let Satan out to do what he wants to, and he's going to bring this great world system to its consummation under one great world dictator, with a one world religion, when all the world were to see. And the question is, what is restraining Satan? It is my conviction that this is a present-day ministry of the Holy Spirit, and as long as the Holy Spirit has not given Satan liberty to go everywhere fulfilling his purpose and bringing his program to its consummation, that the tribulation theory cannot come.

Now, the church is the residence of the Holy Spirit. The church is his body, and believers are in it. What know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? And it is my understanding that when the Lord Jesus Christ shall appear in the heavens and take the temple of the Holy Spirit to himself, even though the Holy Spirit is omnipresent and can carry on a ministry, it's going to be God's signal to Satan, the lid's off, you go ahead and do what you want to do.

The tribulation theory cannot come until all restraint is removed, and that restraint cannot and will not be removed as long as the church is still in this world. Then I believe there is another indication. Will you turn with me to Revelation chapter 4? Again, we come to a point that is variously interpreted, and I'm not going to try to defend the point, but simply give you my understanding and conclusion in this.

After the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 1 to 3, in chapter 4, John moves into the tribulation theory itself, and he looks up into heaven, verse 4, and round about the throne were four and twenty thrones. And upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting. Now, look at the garb of these elders.

They are clothed in white raiment, and if you turn over to chapter 19, the white raiment is the raiment of the saints of this age who have been in glory with the Lord. And they had on their heads crowns of gold, to whom in the scriptures the promise given that they shall wear crowns of gold. Why, to those that overtop in this present church age.

The reward for believers of this present age is that they shall be robed in the righteousness of Christ, and shall be crowned with golden crowns. And we find in verse 10, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne. And what are believers going to do forever? They're going to be occupied in worship and in praise of the Lord.

It is my understanding that these four and twenty elders represent the redeemed, translated glorified, and rewarded body of saints of this present day, or the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, when are they first seen in heaven? But bless your heart, not in the middle of the tribulation or at the end of the tribulation, but at the very beginning of the tribulation, John looks up into heaven and sees them there with the Lord Jesus Christ seated with him on his throne. Now, there are several passages of scripture that I believe very clearly teach us that the church will not go through any of the period of the tribulation.

Look at Revelation 3. I want to look in closing at several verses of scripture that I think teach this very clearly. Revelation 3:10, the letter to the church of Philadelphia, the letter to the true church of the last days of the history of the invisible church on earth, and the Lord says, Behold, thou hast kept the word of my patience. I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Now, notice the promise in the middle of this verse. I also will keep thee from the hour of testing. That's what it says literally.

I will keep you from the hour of testing. Now, you will notice the Lord Jesus did not say, When the hour of testing comes, I will let you go through it, but I'll give you a special garment so you will be delivered through the flames. The children of Israel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when they had to go through the fiery furnace were preserved sovereignly through the flames.

But he didn't say, I'm going to be with you when you go through the tribulation. He said, I'm going to keep you away from the tribulation, translating it literally. And, further, he says, I'm going to keep you from the hour.

I'm going to deliver you out of that period of time when the tribulation falls upon this earth, and it is my earnest conviction that we have a very clear promise to the true church, the faithful church. I will keep thee away from even the time itself when the tribulation shall come on the earth to try them that dwell on the earth. We look at another passage with me, and go back to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. 1 Thessalonians 5, a passage which we read for our scripture this evening, and after in chapter 4 the apostle Paul has written those familiar words describing the translation of the church when we shall be called up to meet the Lord in the air.

It begins in chapter 5 and says, What are the times and seasons, brethren, when this is going to take place? You don't need for me to write you, for you know that the day of the Lord, now just for your own thinking, put in there the tribulation period, comes as a thief in the night. What's the peculiar thing about the coming of a thief in the night? It's unexpected, it's unannounced. No thief sends a letter and says, tomorrow night at midnight I'm going to break into your home, be prepared.

He comes stealthily, he comes unexpectedly and unannounced, and Paul says it would be absolutely foolish for me to try to tell you when the rapture of the church is going to take place, because it's coming as unexpected as the coming of a thief in the night. That means we had better be prepared at all times. Then he continues, when people will say, peace and safety, or let me put it this way, when people will say, there's no possibility of the Lord coming now, what's going to happen? Sudden destruction upon them.

Many use the very graphic illustration as travail upon a woman with child, as the labor pains as suddenly as the labor pains come that are irreversible. So is going to be the coming of the Lord. Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ should come for his church tonight? Do you believe that? If you say, I don't think he's coming tonight, then you better be careful, because that's what the Lord said, that when you say, no, he couldn't come now, the very time he will come and will catch some people unprepared.

Now, he says in verse 4, what about this tribulation period? He said, ye brethren, believers, are not in darkness. You don't belong to darkness, you belong in the light, because Jesus Christ is the light. Verse 5, ye believers are all the children of light and the children of the day.

We're not of the night nor of the darkness. And then he goes down and says in verse 9, God has not appointed us to wrath. Now, what wrath is he talking about? The wrath of the tribulation period, the wrath of the day of the Lord.

And he says, we have not been appointed to the wrath of the day of the Lord. Why? Because the wrath of the day of the Lord is for those who are in darkness, and we're not in darkness, we're in the light. If we

have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, we are light in the Lord.

And since the tribulation period is a period of darkness, then we have no part in it. And the tribulation is for those who are in the night and in the darkness. But God has appointed us to salvation.

Now, what kind of salvation is he talking about? There is salvation from sin, and we already have that, so God hasn't appointed us to get salvation from sin, but there's another kind of salvation. That's salvation out of this earth to you, out of this cursed earth in which we now live. And how are we going to get saved out of this earth? You're going to find resurrection or translation or rapture.

So he says to us, God hasn't appointed us as believers to the wrath of the tribulation, which is for those who are in darkness, but he has appointed us to salvation by translation by the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us. That whether we wake or sleep, that is, whether we are awake or whether we are alive at the time the rapture takes place, or whether we have died in Christ, it doesn't matter. Christ has died for us, and whether we die or whether we are awake, we will all live together with him.

How? By translation. So I believe this passage very clearly teaches us that the church cannot go through that period. It is a period of the wrath of God.

Look at one more passage, back in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1, and verse 9 and 10. 1 Thessalonians 1, 9, and 10. So they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned from God to idols to serve the living and true God, to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Now what wrath is he talking about? If you go back and study in this epistle, you will find that the wrath is the wrath of the tribulation period itself. You can see it in chapter 1 of 2 Thessalonians, chapter 1, verse 7 and 8. To you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his face. There he is speaking of his second coming back here to the earth, as the culmination of his wrath upon godless men.

So when the apostle in 1 Thessalonians 1, 10 says he has delivered us from wrath to come, he is speaking of the wrath that shall be poured out upon this earth. There is a very interesting illustration of this given to us back in the book of Genesis. I want to use it as an illustration this evening.

In Genesis chapter 19, and we find there that God has announced he is going to bring destruction upon the city of Sodom and Gomorrah. Because of their wickedness and their godlessness, God is going to pour out his wrath upon those cities, and they shall be judged by fire from heaven. Now then, we find that God sends a messenger to tell Lot to get out of Sodom.

Lot doesn't belong to Sodom, because we're told in 1 Peter that Lot is a righteous man. Lot was where he had no business being, but Lot is a righteous man. And God sends word to Lot to get out of Sodom, because he's going to pour out his wrath upon it.

And then when we come down to verse 17 of Genesis 19, we read, He said, Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the flame. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. Lot said unto him, O not so, my lord.

And verse 20, told again, This city is near to flee unto his little one. Let me escape thither, and my soul shall live. And the answer comes in verse 22, and this is the word I want you to notice.

The messenger says, Hate thee, escape thither, for I cannot do anything till thou become thither. Do you hear what the angel says to Lot? He says, I'm going to bring the wrath of God upon the wicked, godless cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and you get out of here. You, a righteous man, are holding back the visitation of the judgment of God upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

You get out, because I can't do anything until you get out of here. You see, that's what God is saying to the church today, that this world is going to see the outpouring of the wrath of God upon us. God says to the church of believers in Jesus Christ, I won't and I can't pour out my wrath until you're out of there, because you are the fault of your you are preventing the outpouring of the judgment of the wrath of God.

The time is coming when God is going to call every blood-bought believer of this age to himself. There will be none but ungodly men left upon this earth. They will be left here to undergo that visitation of the wrath of God in their bodies, and then when the tribulation period is over, and they are separated from the faith of the king of kings and lord of lords, they will hear his sentence depart from me, which is into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

The wrath of God upon sinful men. Let me say to you, if you are outside of Christ tonight, beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ could come at any moment. There is not one line in the book that makes it necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ to delay his coming.

He could come at any moment. If you are without Jesus Christ when he comes into the clouds of heaven, you will be left here to undergo the visitation of God's wrath, and to endure eternal separation from God because you rejected Jesus Christ as your Savior. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to take our blood-bought ones out of this earth, too.

We would like to invite you to join us. Accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and then look with us for the time of our translation and glorification. If the church were to go through the tribulation period, half of it or all of it, we would be prepared.

We would know we had seven years, six years, five years, four years, three years, two years, one more to yield before we have to get ready to meet the Lord. But since he is coming at any moment, we don't know when, we will see you. Are you ready? Are you ready? Our Father, may the Spirit of God who has given us this portion of his Word, who has given us the privilege of looking into it this evening, use the Word for our gratification.

Give us the joy in believing in that blessed hope that Jesus Christ shall come to translate us into his presence. Give us the joy, moment by moment, as we live, as we expect and look for him, as there is one here without Christ. May that one step out of darkness into thy marvelous light.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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