

D-Day

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[0 : 01] Good morning, church. It's such a privilege to be able to be given the opportunity to preach the Word of God to the congregation this morning. It's also very good to see many of you had the confidence to turn up this morning to listen to me rather than take the opportunity to visit another church, so that's very encouraging. And for the rest of you who are visiting this morning, I'm so sorry. Okay, enough. Yeah, so I'd just like to thank the leadership of this church, in particular Pastor Brian in inviting me and allowing me to speak this morning. I'm not sure how many hoops that Pastor Brian had to jump over to get me here, but I'm thankful to be here this morning, and I'm sure all the seminars and the conferences that I've been to were leading up to this point. So beware for those of you who have gone to next gen. Okay, now before we dive into the passage, I believe it'll be best that we pray.

More prayer is always good, so let's just bow our heads and I'll pray first before we begin. Dear Lord, we thank you for this opportunity that we can just come and sit under your Word together as your people. Lord, to be refreshed and encouraged and reminded of the goodness and love that you have shown through your Son, Jesus Christ. Lord, we, as we look into your Word this morning, we, and as we look forward to the day of the Lord, we ask, Lord, that you just help us today to be teachable, in particular, for me this morning, Lord, to help me to be faithful, Father God, in the preaching of your Word this morning. And we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, on the early morning of June the 6th, 1944, nearly 160,000 troops would be waiting for what would be the biggest moment of their lives, the biggest moment in the history of the world at the time. And these troops knew that such a day was set to happen, but they did not know the exact time or the exact date. And these 160,000 troops, despite not knowing the exact time and date, nevertheless prepared for this particular day. They had performed countless drills, trained how to shoot, how to move, trained how to jump out of airplanes, and jump and land behind enemy lines. Now, the troops trained constantly and they prepared constantly. They were getting ready.

Now, they were soldiers and this was what they were supposed to do. And by now, for the history buffs in our congregation, and for those who have probably watched the movie Band of Brothers, you would recognize this date and this description I gave you as the day the Allied forces stormed the Normandy beach. And most of us now know this as D-Day. And that's the title for this morning's sermon, D-Day. Now, D-Day was a pivotal point in the war to which some historians called the beginning of the end for Nazi Germany. It was a big day, a momentous day, and a day that will alter the course of human history. Now, this morning, if you have been paying attention to the Bible reading, and if you open your Bibles, you'll find ourselves at 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 1 to 11. And you'll see it in your Bibles, the title, The Day of the Lord. Now, almost immediately, I hope, I hope that all of you get the feeling that this is going to be a pretty big day, right? The day when Jesus returns will be not only a momentous day, but a pivotal moment in time that has been set apart that will not only alter the course of human history, but the history of the universe forever. Now, Church, as we go through the passage this morning, I want to take us through three points that we'll be covering in the passage, which you will see in your outline in the bulletin this morning, if you have one.

They are a day that has been set apart, being set apart in identity, and know that we are set apart for eternity. So those are the three points I'll be covering this morning, and I hope you'll follow me through the outline. Now, verses 1 to 3. Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates, we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying peace and safety, destruction will come on them suddenly as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. Now, Church, I want you to notice in verses 1 to 2, Paul says to the believers that they knew very well, they knew very well that the day of the Lord, Jesus Christ, will come, and that he will come like a thief in the night. Now, Paul is writing to the

[5 : 09] Thessalonian church, so the believers in Thessalonica knew very well that a special day has been set apart for Jesus' second coming. And we get a glimpse of that in the very first chapter at verse 10 of 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 10, where the Thessalonians were waiting for his Son in heaven to rescue them from the coming wrath. Now, the second coming was also not something new that the Apostle Paul spoke of, but it was something that Jesus himself had in fact spoke of as well. And we see that clearly in Matthew chapter 24. And what's interesting, Church, is that Paul uses a similar description as Jesus did in Matthew chapter 24, and you can find that at verses 42 to 44. Now, in Matthew chapter 24, verses 42 to 44, Jesus said this,

Therefore, keep watch because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this, if the owner of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. Similar use of the thief in the night.

Now, Church, the warningless return of Jesus is further emphasized in verse 3, as you can see there, when Paul writes that the destruction will come suddenly.

All right? And in verse 3, we also notice a second group of people. In verse 3, Paul writes that they are people saying peace and safety.

[7 : 06] These people, which Paul refers to in this passage, refer to the unbelievers or the world, as some commentaries put it. But what is especially important to note, Church, is that, which is, and something that we often easily forget, is that when Jesus returns the second time, it will not be pleasant as the first.

Okay. And we know this from the passage because of how Paul uses the expression of labor pains on a pregnant woman. Now, Church, I have never gone into labor myself, nor will I ever, but I am sure the mothers in our congregation this morning can testify that labor pains are not comfortable at all.

Okay. So when Jesus returns again, it will not be a peace mission, Church. And we often forget that sometimes. When Christ returns, there will be serious consequences because he means business, and he is going to set the world straight when he returns again.

Now, Jesus himself tells us in John 5, verses 21 to 30, and even in Matthew 25, verses 31 to 46, that when he returns, it will be a time of judgment where all deeds are laid bare before Jesus Christ, where the righteous will be separated from evil.

Serious business. So what then does that mean for us believers in verses 1 to 3 this morning? Why is it important to know that there has been a day that has been set apart for the return of Jesus Christ?

[9 : 02] Now, for those of you who don't know me very well, or perhaps you may be visiting our church this morning, I work as a lawyer by profession, and part of my work as a lawyer is I do litigation and criminal work.

Now, part of litigation and criminal work is working out what to expect from the opposing side, and I'm sure some of the lawyers in our congregation can agree. Things like what evidence do they have for a particular point, or whether a piece of evidence is ready and prepared.

Sometimes we think whether the opposing side knows whether we have a particular document, or if our witness knows about this document. But the point I'm trying to get at church this morning is that when we know something in advance, it helps us prepare our response.

It helps us shape our response. And likewise, as believers, we know that Jesus is returning.

And that should equally shape our response. And then, I suppose the following question would be, how then are we to respond to Jesus' return?

[10 : 20] Now, I'd like to invite you to turn and look with me to verses 4 to 8, and that's where we get a glimpse of how we respond to Jesus' second coming.

In verses 4 to 8, Paul describes, when our identity is set apart in Christ, different from the world, our response to Jesus' return is also different.

Now, I want you to note this, church. In verse 4, Paul writes that He states that very clearly.

And in verse 5, Paul makes it very clear why the brothers and sisters, us, the believers, ought not to be surprised or unprepared for Jesus' return. He says that you are all, this is in verse 5, you are all children of the light and children of the day.

We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. Now, church, we see here Paul is using a comparison of good and evil, holiness and sin by using the expressions of light and day as opposed to darkness and night.

[11 : 48] Now, Paul makes a very stark distinction in our identity of who we are as opposed to the world, that we do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

Now, our identity as believers and followers of Jesus is that of children of the light and children of the day. Now, the Oxford Dictionary defines identity as the characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is.

All right? Now, in John chapter 8, verses 12, Jesus claims, and some of you may be familiar with this verse, that he is the light of the world. Jesus claims that I am the light of the world.

And when Paul writes that we are his children, when Paul writes that we are as children of something, we belong to that thing or we are characterized by that thing.

See, I'm the son of Barubian, so I'm characterized by his DNA and all that. Right? So, similarly here, in verse 5, because the church had received the gospel, the light of Christ's truth, they now belong to Christ and are characterized by Christ.

[13 : 13] It's the same with us here this morning, church. when we have received the light of Christ's truth in our lives, when we align ourselves to the truth of Jesus Christ and are characterized by it, we are setting apart our identity in Christ.

Our identity in Christ. And not only do we belong to Christ, church, but Paul also says we belong to the day.

And we belong to the day of the Lord when Jesus returns and when he does, Colossians 3, Colossians 3, verse 4 says that we will appear with Jesus in glory.

Now, church, we might have started off with a bit of doom and gloom with all the judgment right? In the beginning. But, I want to encourage you, church, this morning, that this should not invoke a feeling of fear, but rather as a comfort to us who belong to the light.

Because as people, as believers who have aligned themselves with the light of Christ's truth, the day of the Lord will be like a sunrise after a long period of twilight.

- [14 : 37] There is no reason to fear because you have every reason to be prepared and to look forward to Jesus' return. Now, knowing there is a day that has been set apart for Jesus' return, we, therefore, set apart our identity in Christ.

We set ourselves apart in Christ by staying prepared, alert, and vigilant as all believers of Jesus are commanded to do as opposed to the rest of the world.

And we see that in verse 6. Now, Paul tells the Thessalonians not to be like others who are asleep, but to be awake and sober.

In other words, he's telling us to be prepared, alert, and vigilant. Now, remember those troops at D-Day that we started at the beginning?

Now, can you imagine what the commanding officer would say? if a soldier was caught sleeping or drunk when the order was given to move out?

- [15 : 45] On the most, on the brink of the most important time in their life, they are caught unaware of the orders they were being given because they were asleep.

They had abandoned their duty by getting drunk. Now, I can only imagine that the commanding officer wouldn't be very happy and would be giving the soldiers an earful.

Right? So, this is kind of the scenario which Paul is telling us, be watchful, be awake, be sober.

And again, Paul repeats himself in verse 7. If you can look to verse 7 in your Bibles, he repeats himself in verse 7 by saying that those who sleep, sleep at night and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.

Now, if there's one thing I've learned from all the workshops and seminars and the next-gen conferences that I've been to is that if a word is repeated, it's probably very important.

- [16 : 54] Right? and you see the word sleep and drunk being repeated I think three times in a very short span of time. So, Paul is trying to stress something here to us.

Now, when Paul mentions sleep and drunk in verses 6 and 7, he's not referring to actual sin but rather the spiritual negligence or blindness to sin in light of Jesus' return.

Now, in verse 8, in the beginning of verse 8, Paul is very clear that since we belong to the day, he's telling the church not to fall into the same category of people, that second category of people who are asleep and those who intoxicate themselves with the revelries of this world unaware of the consequences of Jesus' return.

Now, in continuation of verse 8, Paul writes, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

Now, this imagery of armor is quite familiar of the apostle Paul and I think when we read that, we immediately think of Ephesians 6, 11, where Paul tells us to put on the whole armor of God.

- [18 : 37] Right? But even as we remain prepared, we remain vigilant for Jesus' return. Paul is aware of the dangers of this world and knows that while remaining prepared and vigilant, we the believers have to be properly equipped.

We see there, putting on faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

Now, firstly, there are three things that I want us to notice this morning, church, from this verse. Firstly, I want you to notice that Paul writes putting on.

Putting on faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet. Now, the word putting on, it is not something that is done once, but it is something that is a continuous action, something that we do continuously.

We don't put it on just once and take it off. No, we do it continuously. Secondly, I want you to notice that the two pieces of armor which I mentioned, the breastplate which is where it's on the torso, right?

[20 : 04] and the helmet where you put it on your head are protection for the heart and the head. These are the two most vital points in the human body.

A shot or a step to the head or to the heart would be fatal. Now, Paul recognizes this and takes care to mention this to the Thessalonians.

And lastly, doesn't the sentence kind of ring a bell somewhere other than the armor of God? Putting on the faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

If we turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verses 13, we find ourselves at a very familiar verse. And that is, and now these three remain.

Faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love. Familiar, isn't it? Now, Paul is putting that here in verse 8.

[21 : 15] And these actually are what commentators call the three principal parts of Christian life or the three virtues of Christian life, faith, hope, and love.

And Paul says that we have to defend our heart and our head with these three things. And I like how some commentators capture this defense church.

They say that the head needs to be kept from error and the heart from sin. We have here the breastplate of faith and love for the righteousness which is imputed to man for justification.

faith is faith working by love. Faith as the motive within and love exhibited in outward acts constitutes the perfection of righteousness.

Now from faith if we believe that the eye of God is always upon us, that there is another world to prepare for, we then see reason to watch and be sober.

[22 : 32] A true and fervent love to God, church, and the things of God will keep us watchful and sober. forever. And the hope of salvation sustains our courage amid all the trials of life and taking notice of anything that would shake our trust in the Lord by holding out to us the prospect of eternal blessedness.

that's why we have to put on faith and love as the breastplate. That is why we put on hope of salvation as a helmet. Vigilance is of no avail unless armed by faith, hope, and love.

Church, I also want to suggest to you this morning that what we are equipping in verse 8, faith, hope, and love, is more than just protection against temptation and trials of the evil one, but in fact they also reflect who we are.

We talked about the identity in Christ, and faith, hope, and love in fact reflect that identity in Jesus Christ.

Now we catch a glimpse of how this sets apart, how faith, hope, and love sets apart our identity in Christ. Now if we can all turn to the very first chapter of Thessalonians, if you have your Bibles with you, to turn to the very first chapter of 1 Thessalonians and to see and read for ourselves how truly we can be different.

[24 : 22] Now if you're all there at 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, you see that at verse 3, the virtues, the three virtues at work. Again, we see there is work produced by faith, we see labor prompted by love, and an endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now look at verse 6 onwards and what the Thessalonian church had become. They had become imitators of Christ, we see that in verse 6, they had become a model to all believers in Macedonia and Anarchaea, that's verse 7, and the gospel spread and grew and people everywhere, people everywhere knew of their faith in God.

You see that in verse 8. See, the Thessalonian church, the Thessalonian Christians were basically sticking out like a sore thumb. And this was all a result of faith, hope, and love.

What a way to set apart our identity to the world church. Friends, a day has been set apart for the day of the Lord. Therefore, set apart your identity in Christ.

Set apart your identity in Christ. coming back to our troops at D-Day, right?

[26 : 01] Now, there was a reason behind setting up the invasion plans of D-Day. Now, the soldiers weren't preparing for the sake of fighting, but because there was a purpose behind what they were doing.

was more than just for the day of the invasion, but what D-Day would mean for the war as a whole. Now, as we come to the end of our passage this morning, verses 9 and 10 tells us what the foreknowledge and identity is for.

that is to receive salvation so that we may live together with Christ when he returns. Right?

Now, earlier in verse 3, I mentioned that, I mentioned about the judgment of Christ when he returns. Now, we see here that Paul is now ending that narrative again with the reminder of the privilege we have obtained as children of the light and children of the day.

Now, once again, verse 10 might sound familiar. We may live together with him and we see a bit of that in John 14 verses 1 to 4.

[27 : 31] Before the betrayal and death of Jesus, Jesus says this to his disciples in encouragement. Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God.

Believe also in me. My father's house has many rooms. If that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.

This assurance to his disciples is the very same promise for every believer church, for every child of the light.

Paul reminds the Thessalonian church in verse 10 what all this effort is for and is reminding us today the very same.

[28 : 34] knowing that our final home is with our Creator in eternity, should that not spur us on to continue to be watchful and alert, to have our identity remain in Christ as we prepare for the day of the Lord?

I think it should. And finally, Paul instructs the church to keep up the good work of encouraging and building up one another.

And the word encourage here is the same word that appears as comfort in Thessalonians in the preceding chapter.

And some commentators suggest that Paul is concluding his consolatory address to those who are mourning over the loss of their friends in the previous chapter.

Now, that was because Paul had to deal with the pastoral question of what happens to those who have died before seeing Christ return. And he deals with that in chapter 4 and uses the same word, encourage or comfort.

[29 : 47] But I believe this fits also as Paul in verse 10 also makes mention of those who are awake, that is those who are still alive, and those who are asleep, meaning for those who have passed away.

But the bigger picture church here still remains that the Christian life, that the Christian life just isn't about the vertical relationship that we have with Jesus.

It's not just about heaven, but it also encompasses the horizontal relationship we have with fellow believers.

in mourning or in joy, we are to encourage one another in equipping faith, hope, and love as we look forward to the day that we will be with Christ in glory.

And we see that at verse 11. Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. Just as in fact you are doing.

[30 : 55] So what does that look like, church? in the life of this church? What does encouraging one another and building each other up look like in this church?

Now, I think perhaps joining a cell group or a home fellowship group is perhaps one way to begin.

Otherwise, that would be the best place to connect with the community of believers in this church, to forge your relationships, to know the needs of others beyond the Sunday hellos and goodbyes.

It could also be in the form of service to the church, setting aside two hours on a Saturday to serve in the music ministry, or perhaps to lead a Bible study in the youth ministry, serving others by preparing refreshments after church service.

There are many ways we can build and encourage one another, church. Remember, we are all in this together, knowing that a day has been set apart for the Lord, so we set apart ourselves in Christ because we have been set apart for eternity.

[32 : 18] We have been set apart for eternity. Now, I know my time is almost up, so as I close this morning, church, and as I invite the musicians to make their way, prepare to make their way up to the stage, I want to do two things this morning.

I want to do two things this morning before I close. Firstly, for those who perhaps it is your first or second time in this church this morning and you're visiting and you probably do not know Jesus yet, I want to leave you with this thought.

This world is not the one and only start. This world is not the one and only start. When this life ends, there is hope beyond the grave.

This is because there was a man who died for you and I to redeem us from sin, to give us eternal life, that we may enjoy eternity in heaven where sin is no more.

This man is Jesus Christ and he does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. Now I assure you that I am not here to frighten you this morning, but at the same time I also can't downplay the seriousness of, the serious consequences of Jesus' return in today's passage.

[33 : 50] What I am trying to do this morning is to point out to you that there is a fire and here's the escape route. For those of you who are visiting our church this morning who still do not know Jesus yet, I want to invite you to perhaps think about exploring who this Jesus is and the hope and security that you can have in this life and beyond when you place your trust in him.

Christmas is just around the corner and that might just be the right place to start. And for the believers, for the brothers and sisters of this church, our D-Day moment comes without warning.

Our D-Day moment comes without warning. Be awake and sober. Live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God.

Be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

to him be both the glory now and forever more. Amen. Amen.