

Anxiety over the Return of Christ
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Introduction: Do you look forward to the return of Christ with joyful anticipation or do you have an uneasy feeling about it sensing that it be a day of experiencing God's displeasure? All of us have some regrets about how we have lived our lives. We know we've come up short in our walks with God at times. And so what does this mean for how we will experience the return of Christ? In the passage that we are looking at today, Paul addresses such concerns. He offers perspectives that should get rid of our anxieties about the return of Christ and motivate us to live in a state of preparedness for that Day. May this study help each of us know that we can look forward to the return of Christ as well as live in a way that is consistent with that Day.

Opening Discussion: When you think about the return of Christ, do you tend to have more of a sense of joyful anticipation or dread? Why?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

1. How does Paul describe the "day of the Lord" (v. 2)?
2. What does it mean that Jesus' second coming will be like "a thief in the night" (v. 2)?
3. How does Paul contrast believers and unbelievers? What characterizes each?
4. What commands does Paul give in this passage?
5. What does it mean that believers are "sons of light and sons of day" as opposed to being "of night" or "of darkness" (v. 5)?
6. What does it mean to "be alert and sober" (v. 6)?

Steve said:

Can you identify anything in your life that is making you spiritually dull and foggy? Is there anything that is keeping you from being wide awake and clear-headed? There have been times in my life when unforgiveness has made me spiritually dull. I spent so much time mulling over an offense against me that I'm sure I missed some of what God wanted me to experience. Sometimes a sin can dominate a person's life to the point where s/he is consumed with guilt and shame; there's no energy or motivation to seek God and participate in what He's doing around you. At the risk of being misunderstood I'd like to mention one other issue. Sometime our habits of eating/drinking and exercise and sleeping can leave us spiritually groggy. Trust me, I understand that you can't decide, "I'm going to eat well, exercise 5x a week, sleep 8 hours and night and then I'll feel spiritually alert and clear-headed." I know that it's not that simple. But we should pay attention to these things because they do affect our mental, emotional, and physical health (see 1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

7. Can you identify anything in your life that is making you spiritually dull; not fully alert? And if so, what do you need to live more spiritually alert?

8. How is faith and love like a breastplate (v. 8)?

9. How is salvation like a helmet (v. 8)?

10. Practically, what do you think it would look like in your life to live as a person ready for Christ's return? Is it a matter of just not sinning or is there more to it than that?