

# 1 Thessalonians

## Chapter 5

It's 50 A.D. in the cult-ridden seaport of Thessaloniki in today's northern Greece. Many Jews and Gentiles have embraced Paul's news that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah whose death paid for all our sins, and that we receive God's pardon by faith, not by earning it. Let's read Dr. Luke's account in Acts 17:1-15, p. 999 GNB.

**Now Paul's own words in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28 (p. 1076).**

### *Rapture, Then Rapture* *1 Thessalonians 5:1-11*

The King James Bible opens with “*But* of the times and the seasons ...” *But* signals a contrast. In ch. 4 Paul introduced the Rapture which he learned of in person, in heaven, from the risen Son of God. At the Rapture Christ's followers are gathered up to meet the Lord *in* the clouds. But in ch. 5 we read about “the Second Coming” when Christ returns to Jerusalem *on* the clouds to rule His earthly Kingdom. This occurs at the conclusion of the Tribulation, i.e., “Day of the Lord,” which Peter alerted Jewish converts to so they could warn their unsaved friends (2 Peter 3:10-13, p. 1113).

Believers are “people of the *light* who belong to the *day*,” who are “in Christ,” “awake and sober,” having the “hope of salvation” (rescue) and will not “suffer God's anger.” But pre-believers are in “the *darkness*” of ignorance or unbelief, “sleeping” or “drunk.”

Whether alive or dead at the Rapture, believers will “live together” forever with Christ. Encouraging indeed (John 14:1-3, p. 970)! But this event precedes seven years of horror when God judges the world, not those of us who have surrendered our lives to Christ, never to be condemned again for our sins because on the cross Jesus took the punishment we deserved (Romans 8:1-4, p. 1021).

DISCUSS: What questions does this information raise?

The Bible warns of unequalled carnage in the “last days,” as God judges this sinful world with droughts, hail, famines, crime-gone-wild, nuclear wars, chaos, plagues, indescribable violence, global darkness, “mark of the beast,” billions die, oceans polluted, super-earthquakes, major cities vaporized (Revelation 6-19). Millions trust Christ; most are martyred (Isaiah 2:11-22, p. 614).

At the battle of Armageddon Christ returns to defeat Satan, then reigns over 1,000 years of peace on earth (Revelation 20-22). Next is the Great White Throne when God dispatches Satan and all unbelievers to an unquenchable “lake of fire” (Joel 2:30-32, p. 810; Revelation 20:11-14, p. 1136).

DISCUSS: What does this look-ahead do for your state of mind?

*Juiced For Jesus*  
*1 Thessalonians 5:12-28*

Like Jesus' first disciples, we too want to know where are we on God's timetable (Matthew 24:7-8, p. 879; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, p. 1085). So, how should we conduct ourselves as these pangs escalate in today's deteriorating culture (Philippians 4:8-9, p. 1069)?

DISCUSS: What's our role in the spiritual battle for the soul of America?

If it seems impossible to respect our leaders, to do good to everyone, avoid evil, follow the Holy Spirit's leading, it is! How can you be always joyful, praying and thankful? Only Jesus checks off all these boxes! Paul tosses us this lifeline: Jesus will live like this in and through us by His power, not ours. "He, the faithful One, will do it!"

DISCUSS: How has God been confirming this truth in your life?

Knowing that we believers will never face God's judgment for our sins (although we suffer their consequences in this life), we have God's peace and power to warn those around us so that they will not have to live through the cosmic calamities of the Tribulation.

Riddled with bone cancer, my daughter Laurie, 47, went to heaven in January 2011. Earlier, she wrote to her friend, Ichabod Caine:

***"Layer #1 'Does God LOVE me?' So many 'then why.....' questions are in this layer, and I needed to address each one. And God did 'love' me while I struggled with this...He loved me with flowers and cards and pink iPods and visits and phone calls and many other things.***

***"Next layer was TRUST ... 'Do I really trust Him?' Even if it means I die from this and leave my kids and Chad?! Do I trust in the hardest of times or just when it doesn't have terrible consequences? Do I trust that if I die, my kids will be ok?...that He holds their lives as well as mine? If my world is shaken to the core...do I trust Him?***

***"The next layer was CONTROL ... I learned that control is really nothing but a façade. He showed me that I have no control, none, zero....over the cancer or anything else for that matter. I can't control the cancer or the medicine or whether or not I will die, or if my***

*marriage will survive this, or what my kids will grow up to be like and on and on and on....This layer was hard, very hard, as it overlaps with the trust layer in a big way.*

*“Then HOPE.... ‘What is real hope?’ How in the world do you have hope when things look the way they do? How do you have hope when you don’t see it or feel it?...Hope is not a feeling....but it is a choice.*

*“Then there is ... THE TRUTH: Ohhhhh, I am a feely person....I love feelings....but they are so under the influence.....too tired, bad day, overwhelmed, traffic, bad doctor news, head cold....I had to find and hang on to the truth despite the fact that my feelings told me otherwise....Truth: God is good. God knows what He is doing. God loves me. I can trust Him.”*

DISCUSS: Where are you in dealing with Laurie’s pivotal questions: Who’s in control? What’s my hope? Does God love me? Do I trust Him?

For those who are not “in Christ,” eternity is hideous, hopeless, but for those who are “in Christ,” heaven can’t come soon enough. Who in your circle needs to know this? How will they hear it?

His Deal

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# “The Way Home”

✓ “It’s not possible for a person to succeed – I’m talking about *eternal* success – without **heaven’s help**” (John 3:27).

✓ “**Everyone has to die** once, then **face the consequences**. Christ’s death was also a one-time event, but it was a sacrifice that **took care of sins forever**. And so, when he next appears, the outcome for those eager to greet him is, precisely, **salvation**” (Hebrews 9:27-27).

✓ “For the **reward of sin is death**; but what **God freely gives is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord**.” (Romans 6:23).

✓ “... whoever **accepts and trusts the Son** gets in on everything, life complete and forever! ... the person who **avoids and distrusts the Son** is in the dark and doesn’t see life. All he experiences of God is darkness, an angry darkness at that” (John 3:36).

✓ “**God puts people right** through their **faith in Jesus Christ**. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: **everyone has sinned** and is far away from God's saving presence. But by the **free gift of God's grace** all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. God offered him, so that by his blood he should become **the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in him**” (Romans 3:22-26).

✓ “For it is **by God's grace** that you have been **saved through faith**. It is not the result of your own efforts, but **God's gift**, so that **no one can boast** about it.” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

✓ “If you **confess that Jesus is Lord** and **believe that God raised him** from death, **you will be saved**. For it is **by our faith** that we are **put right with God**; it is by our confession that we are saved” (Romans 10:9-10).

✓ “**God has given us eternal life**, and this life has its source in his Son. Whoever has the Son has this life; **whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life**. I am writing this to you so that **you may know that you have eternal life**—you that believe in the Son of God” (1 John 5:10-13).