

The Thessalonian believers knew about the coming day of the Lord. They would not suffer God's wrath. But they needed to be encouraged to live in a manner that fit who they were in Christ. An important purpose of prophecy is to motivate believers to live holy and godly lives (2 Peter 3:11).

As sons or children of the light and of the day the Thessalonians did not need to fear future judgment, but they did need to live as children of light. They needed to have and practice an eternal perspective, as do you. Therefore, there are certain truths you need to understand clearly.

**I. Understand who you are (5:4–5).**

1. The figurative terms to describe people:
  - a. Darkness pictures moral insensitivity and night is where darkness reigns. Light pictures spiritual awareness and life; day is where light reigns.
  - b. Other passages illustrate this, such as Matthew 4:16; John 3:19; Acts 26:18; Ephesians 6:12; Romans 13:12; 2 Corinthians 4:6.
2. The essential nature of the believer is light.
  - a. Believers are neither in darkness nor of the night, but belong to the day and to the light. ("Sons of ..." means they have the characteristics of something. Since God is light (1 John 1:5), children of God have the characteristics of light. Even desires have changed (cf. Romans 7:18, 22).
  - b. Both the essential nature and the realm of the believer has changed (Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9).
3. Therefore, true believers are aware of the sinfulness of sin and God's righteous demand to judge sin. Those who turn to God in Christ have had their sins judged on the cross. They understand that judgment is waiting for those who have not turned to Christ.

**II. Understand your individual responsibility (5:6–10; cf. 2 Peter 3:10–11).**

1. Every child of God, as a child of the light, is responsible to live different than the world (5:6–7).
  - a. The emphasis is on the contrast of action: not asleep but awake; sober and not drunk.
  - b. These actions are figures of moral and spiritual alertness or sensitivity and self-control. The physical realm illustrates the moral world (v. 7).
2. Believers, who belong to the day, should remain sober (self-controlled) as is necessary for anyone in spiritual conflict (vv 8–10).
  - a. Armor, implies conflict (cf. Ephesians 6:14–17), and should have been put on. The breastplate protects vital organs. Faith toward God and love toward people help guard the vital "organs": emotions (Phil 1:8), thoughts (Genesis 6:5; Mark 7:20–23), moral sensibility (Jeremiah 17:9).
  - b. The helmet, which receives emphasis in vv 9–10, protects the head from blows that would cloud thinking. Always keep clearly in mind that God has planned salvation since before creation and determined to punish Jesus, His Son, in the place of the believer. He does this that all believers may live together with Christ.

Live in a manner that fits who you are. Freedom from judgment is freedom to live a life pleasing to God.

**III. Understand how to live together as believers (5:11)**

1. Encourage one another. Or in a broader sense, come along side one another to provide what is needed, whether comfort, encouragement or exhortation. Every believer is responsible to do this.
2. Build each other up, or "edify". Each contributes to the other what is needed to grow. Don't focus on what you have or haven't received, but first on what you have given. Then consider if you are ready to receive even the "hard" words.

Believers live today in light of a certain future. Judgment is certain for the world without Christ. Salvation is certain for believers for whom Christ was judged in their place. Believers do not belong to the world in darkness, and therefore should live in accordance with who they are, children of light.