

“Be Ready”  
1 Thessalonians 5:1-3  
(Preached at Trinity, November 3, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In the previous verses Paul has set our hearts upon the second coming of Christ. It will be a spectacular event. Jesus will come with His holy angels with Him to gather the elect from the four corners of the earth and to bring history to a close. Every eye will behold Him. This has long been the hope of the church. Jesus is coming. At the appointed time, Jesus is coming in clouds of glory.
2. There is a natural question that follows such an announcement. When?  
We are creatures of time. If a major event is announced our next question is always, when? A boss tells his employee, I'm going to give you a raise, soon. WHEN?  
A man tells his wife, I've booked a transatlantic cruise – WHEN?  
The doctor announces, you have a terminal disease and you are going to die – WHEN?  
Will you marry me? WHEN? An engagement always involves a ring and a date – WHEN?
3. After Jesus announced the coming destruction of the Temple and the end of the age His disciples asked Him this question:  
**Matthew 24:3 NAU** - "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"
4. It will be at the appointed time, but at a time unknown. The answer to when is kept as one of God's secrets. We are not told the time, but it could be at any moment. Jesus will come suddenly and unexpectedly. The sudden and unexpected nature of His return is a truth often repeated by Christ.  
**Matthew 24:44 NAU** - "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*."  
**Matthew 25:13 NAU** - "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour."  
**Mark 13:32 NAU** - "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*."  
**Acts 1:7 NAU** - "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority"
5. Paul writes in **Verses 1-2**:  
**1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 NAU** - "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night."  
Most translations translate it “times and seasons” – from the word *καιρός*  
It refers to measurement of time—literally translated “times and seasons of time.”
  - A. Paul says he had no need to write on this because Jesus had already declared no one knew the time but the Father.
  - B. If Jesus taught that no man would know the day nor the hour, the time nor the season, Paul had no further revelation about it.

6. It is a serious consideration, because this will mark the end of time, the destruction of the earth, and the final judgment of all men. This is one of the most solemn of all considerations. And to consider that it could happen at any moment is breathtaking.
7. To describe the unexpected nature of the return of Christ Paul uses the illustration of the thief in the night. - "just like a thief in the night."
- A. This is an illustration Jesus used  
**Matthew 24:43-44 NAU** - "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.  
<sup>44</sup> "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will.*"
- B. We lock our doors because thieves do not announce their arrival. They come at unexpected times – one is wise to always be prepared
- C. Paul uses the phrase, “peace and safety” to describe the false sense of security, pretending all is well while the thief stands just outside the door.
8. Then Paul used an illustration of a woman in labor. The return of Christ will not only be sudden and unexpected, it is also be unavoidable.  
 Labor comes at a set time, sometimes at an unexpected time. But it is also an unavoidable time, an inescapable time.
9. Many other illustrations were used to stress the suddenness of Christ’s return. We’ll rehearse a few:
- A. The illustration of the master away on a long journey.  
**Mark 13:35-37 NAU** - "Therefore, be on the alert-- for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning-- <sup>36</sup> in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. <sup>37</sup> "What I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'"
- a. His return is unexpected. The faithful servant remains vigilant and maintains his duties faithfully.  
**Matthew 24:45-46 NAU** - "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? <sup>46</sup> "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes."
- b. Are you pressing on in faithfulness as a servant of Christ? Look back over the last five years. Are you more faithful or less faithful? Are you growing weary or are you pressing on.
- B. The illustration of the virgins  
**Matthew 25:1-13 NAU** - "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.  
<sup>2</sup> "Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. <sup>3</sup> "For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup> but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep. <sup>6</sup> "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him.*' <sup>7</sup> "Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> "The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' <sup>9</sup> "But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.' <sup>10</sup> "And while they

were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup> "Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' <sup>12</sup> "But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' <sup>13</sup> "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour."

C. The illustration of the Days of Noah – **Matthew 24:37-39**

**Matthew 24:37-39 NAU** - "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. <sup>38</sup> "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be."

1. Many wrongly use these verses to point to the wickedness of that generation. They say, "We are living in days just like the days of Noah" While this may be true, this is not the context of the passage. The teaching here points again to the unexpectedness of the return of Christ
2. Life was going on as usual for the wicked of Noah's day They were eating and drinking. They were beginning new families and planning futures until the very end
3. Luke adds:  
**Luke 17:28-33 NAU** - "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; <sup>29</sup> but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. <sup>30</sup> "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. <sup>31</sup> "On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back. <sup>32</sup> "Remember Lot's wife. <sup>33</sup> "Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses *his life* will preserve it."
4. When Jesus returns it will be a day like any other. People will be going about their lives.

D. The illustration of the lost opportunity

When Christ returns every opportunity to be saved will be lost forever.

**Matthew 24:40-42 NAU** - "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>41</sup> "Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>42</sup> "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."

1. People working side by side shall be forever divided
2. It will happen in an instant
3. Multitudes will be caught unprepared and be forever lost  
**Mark 13:33 NAU** - "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come."
4. If you have not repented of your sin and trusted Christ you are in a most dangerous condition. Eternity is at the door. You are about to stand before Christ.

10. While the Bible stresses the unforeseen nature of the return of Christ it also stresses the nearness. Thus, Paul was able to write:  
**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 NAU** - "the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"  
 Paul wrote "We" not "They." Paul wrote with an expectation that it would occur during his lifetime.
- I. The point is we must always be ready for His return  
 We must live with a sense of expectation. We must not grow weary.
- A. Jesus is coming back to end this present age and it could happen today. You could be on a countdown with eternity. History could in its final seconds.
1. How do we prepare ourselves?  
 The chief way to be ready for the return of Christ is not to know the date but to consider our need for a Savior. Being ready demands turning to Christ in faith.  
**John 5:24 NAU** - "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."
  2. When He returns He will return as the righteous Judge – with a flaming sword. Paul uses the expression "Day of the Lord."  
**1 Thessalonians 5:2 NAU** - "the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night."  
    - a. As I've stated before, "Day of the Lord" is an OT concept to describe God's coming in judgment.  
**Joel 1:15 NAU** - "Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty."
    - B In these opening verses of **Chapter 5** Paul's primary focus is upon the lost. There is an "us and them" construct.  
**Verse 3** – "destruction will come upon them . . ."  
**Verse 4** – "but you . . ."
  3. All men will stand before Him and only those who have trusted God's gift of redemption in Christ will be saved from the wrath to come.  
**2 Corinthians 5:10 NAU** - "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."
  4. The Day of the Lord will bring total destruction. Everything on this earth will be destroyed.  
**2 Peter 3:10** - "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."  
    - a. If all things are held together by the infinite power of God, if He merely release His hold and it will come apart.
    - b. There will be full annihilation of everything we know to prepare the way for all things new.

5. It could happen at any moment – In every age Christians have watched with a sense of expectation. Those who live in expectation of His return keep their sights upon eternity. They press on in holiness.  
**2 Peter 3:11-14 NAU** - "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! <sup>13</sup> But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup> Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,"

B. The early church was always looking in expectation for Christ.

1. The Thessalonians were looking for His return  
**1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 NAU** - "For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, <sup>10</sup> and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come."  
 Waiting in a Biblical sense is eager patience.
2. The Philippians were looking for His return  
**Philippians 3:20-21 NAU** - "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>21</sup> who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."
3. Paul's Epistle to Titus –  
**Titus 2:11-13 NAU** - "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup> instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,"
4. It is a sad reality that most Christians today have a greater focus on this present life than on that which is soon to come.

C. The truth is you have no guarantee of any day beyond today, any moment beyond this moment.

1. He may return and you will stand before Him speechless  
 What will you have to say?
2. He has already warned you,  
 “now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation”

II. This life is uncertain – Jesus could return at any moment.

Death also looms before us and could come at any time.

For those who have died, this life has already come to an end.

A. Human life is always in danger of coming to an end

1. Death is a reality of life.
  - a. The day is coming for each of us when your body will lie cold and lifeless. Yet, you say “Not this day.”
  - b. 150,000 people die daily
2. We must live in constant expectation.

- B. How then shall we live? What does a life of expectation look like?
1. We must desire to be found faithful to the very last moment  
**1 John 2:28 NAU** - "Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming."
  2. Paul stressed the importance of finishing well  
**2 Timothy 4:7 NAU** - "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith"
  3. In these final chapters of 1 Thes. Paul has stressed the importance of growing in holiness – of sanctification  
**1 Thes 4:3 NAU** - "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" Our sanctification is always by God's grace and His power—but He has provided us with means of grace. Do you believe it? Are you giving yourselves to God's appointed means?
  4. Living in expectation demands maintain priorities.  
 To comprehend the great value of God's Word.  
 To savor our time in prayer.  
 To put a high value upon the church.  
 To kindle our love for one another –  
**1 Thes 4:10 NAU** - "But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,"
  5. The chief priority as we live in expectation is to live with our heart fixed upon Christ – to savor Him and maintain those things that increase our relationship with Him. To look with excitement at the prospect of seeing Him.

#### Conclusion:

1. While we are warned against seeking to know the times and seasons, we should always remain watchful.  
 We can expect difficulties, but we can press on despite difficulties.  
 We can expect opposition, but we must press on despite opposition.  
**Mark 13:13 NAU** - "You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."
2. What is your duty at this moment? To be watchful and continue faithfully serving Christ.  
**Matthew 24:44 NAU** – "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will.*"