



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, November 13-19 (A) – 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Focus: *Encourage One Another and Build Up Each Other*

word of life

“... so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.” 1 Thessalonians 5:10 (NRSV)

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

No one knows when the end will come. Paul did not know. The Thessalonians did not know. We just don't know.

It will be like a thief who comes in the night without warning. Or the end comes like for a pregnant woman who experiences labor pains. At that point, there is no escape. The only thing we know for sure is that we do not know.

1. *Do you find these words reassuring? Explain your answer.*
2. *How much time should we invest trying to figure out when the end will come?*

Paul spends very little time on a topic about which he does not know much information. He simply doesn't want his beloved congregation to worry about the end of time. He understands them to be connected with Christ and describes them as children of the day. They live transparent lives, easily observed by others.

3. *What does it mean to be a child of the day?*
4. *Is it possible for a Christian to hide from God?*
5. *If you wanted to hide from God, how would you do it?*

Paul affirms the congregation again and again, but the Thessalonians still needs encouragement and guidance. He reminds them to not fall asleep and become complacent. Instead, they are to stay awake and be ready.

Just as Paul began his letter to the Thessalonians with a favorite triad of faith, hope, and love (1 Thessalonians 1:3), he now concludes his letter with that same triad. (5:8) He encourages followers of Jesus to not just be ready, but to wear the clothing of battle. “... put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.” (1 Thessalonians 5:8 NRSV)

6. *What does the breastplate of faith and love look like?*
7. *How do you put on a helmet of salvation?*
8. *What other apparel might you suggest for followers of Christ?*

Paul is fully engaged in faith, allowing his love for Christ to provide a lens to see the world. He uses images to strengthen faith and motivate discipleship. Paul desires nothing less than a full commitment, both inside and outside.

The bottom line is captured in this phrase: “whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.” (5:10) So what else matters? This theology frees Paul to boldly live. Yet, he does not live in isolation. He wants us to be freed by Christ and for Christ. He encourages others and builds up others. To Paul, that is an important part of being a Christian. He lives in community—despite his many miles away from those whom he loves.

9. *What makes Paul's theology so freeing?*
10. *When do we have opportunities to encourage one another?*

word *among us*

Everyone in the family seemed to have fun at Friday's night football game. The fact the home team pulled out a victory in the final 45 seconds only made it sweeter. The children were laughing as they entered their home; but when they opened the front door, the laughter stopped abruptly.

Their entire home was upside down. Sometime during the football game, a thief had broken into their home, stealing their television and computers.

1. *Have you ever had your home or apartment burglarized?*
2. *What was that experience like?*
3. *What can be done to protect a home from thieves?*
4. *Can you ever be fully burglar-proofed?*

Paul writes in Thessalonians that the end of time will come when we do not know—like a thief at night. He cautions followers of Christ to be awake and get ready.

5. *If the end were today, do you feel ready?*
6. *If not, how might you get ready for the end?*

The key verse in this passage is: “whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.” (1 Thessalonians 4:10 NRSV) Take a moment to repeat that phrase several times silently.

7. *Where have you heard that passage before?*
8. *How can that verse help reduce worries?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people.

Living among God's faithful people is a privilege of being part of the church. There are no perfect people in the church. The Holy Spirit is at work in each of us. When worries send us down a path away from God, it is helpful to have others in the church encourage us.

9. *When has the church helped you through a difficult time?*
10. *How does worshipping with a faith community give you perspective?*

Paul suggests followers of Jesus wear the apparel of faith, hope, and love. (See 1 Thessalonians 5:8) Imagine having a fashion show where people of your church were encouraged to create their own breastplate of faith and love. Take a moment to imagine what helmets and hats of hope would look like.

11. *Share the images of clothing which comes to mind.*
12. *In what ways does our exterior clothing match our interior faith?*
13. *What can you do to remember to wear faith, love, and hope each day?*

Prayer

O Christ, whether we are awake or asleep, let us live with you. Amen

last word

Each morning
take a moment and imagine wearing
the clothing of
faith, love, and hope.

